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"He that beareth both the witness  
in himself."





PAUL THE MYSTIC



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# PAUL THE MYSTIC

## A STUDY IN APOSTOLIC EXPERIENCE

BY

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"AFTER PENTECOST—WHAT?"

"CLERICAL TYPES," ETC.

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## PREFACE

**I**N the Lives of Paul which have appeared, —and their name is legion,—scant justice has been done to the mystical element in his religious experience and in his teaching. And yet nothing is more characteristic of Paul than his mysticism. Although not liking him any the better for it, Professor A. B. Bruce frankly admits that “he was a man of profoundly mystical religious temperament.”<sup>1</sup> He was the kind of man who could not be content to dwell on the outside of religion, but sought to reach that which was furthest within. He is generally thought of merely as a consummate logician—a skilful system-builder. He was much more than that. He was first of all a poet, and afterwards a logician. He writes with the exuberant imagination of a true Oriental, often sublimely indifferent to logical sequence, and displaying a subtilty of thought incomprehensible to the mere grammarian or textual critic. Moreover, his dialectical temper was held in captivity to

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, p. 220.

a spiritual aim which led him frequently to stop short in an argument and make his appeal from logic to life. The movement of his mind was towards the centre. The truths which he valued, and upon which his spirit fed, were those which were mystical and vital. Out of the deep well of his mystical experience flows a stream which makes glad the city of God. At a time when there is a revival of interest in the subject of mysticism, a study of this neglected side of Paul's experience, and of the teaching which grew out of it, is certainly timely ; and if reverently pursued it can hardly fail to lead to the deepening of the spiritual life.

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# PAUL THE MYSTIC

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

THE “within things,” or the things which take place within a man, form the most important part of his biography. To know only a man’s outward deeds is not to know the real man. It is in the spiritual self—“the hidden man of the heart”—that we find the centre of personality and the secret of personal worth. Marcus Aurelius declares that the chief question for any man to ask is this—“How goes it with your inner self?” The regnancy of the spiritual self St. Augustine asserts when he says, “My body lives by my soul, and my soul by me.” The writer of *Theologia Germanica* goes a step further, and says, “As the body liveth by the soul, even so the soul liveth by God.”

Some men lock themselves up. They are enigmas to their nearest friends. Paul was one of those who revealed himself. He turned himself inside out. He laid bare his shrinking,



sensitive, quivering soul to the gaze of others. This was not an easy thing for him to do. But he had a purpose in doing it ; and that purpose was to “magnify the grace of God which was in him,”—the grace which had cleansed the deepest springs of his life ; the grace which had transfigured his character with a glory not its own.

The study of Paul’s inward experience is interesting not only to the psychologist, but to the man who is seeking to gain a practical knowledge of the hidden forces of Christian life and activity. It is impossible to go far into it without perceiving that there are mystical depths which cannot be fathomed by the intellect alone ; but which yield of their secrets to those only who are possessed of a kindred life. Paul himself looked with wonder into the mysterious region within him in which the divine and human met and mingled. The divine influences, of which he was the subject, he only partially understood. His experience often carried him over the boundary-line of the land of mystery. He had an intuitive perception of “truths which never can be proved,” a conviction of knowing the unknowable ; a consciousness of “partaking of the ineffable” ; a sense of personal contact with the ultimate realities which lie behind all outward religious phenomena. The controlling principle of his life was the direct communion

of his spirit with "the Father of spirits." Like Moses, "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." The assertion of Pfleiderer, that the dialectical side of Paul's character has been made to overshadow the mystical, is well founded. He rightly attributes to him a surplusage of "that mysticism of feeling which we find everywhere in the history of religion to be the most genuine and fruitful source of religious life and thought."<sup>1</sup> The value of this judgment is in no wise invalidated by subsequent attempts to empty the mystical experiences of Paul of all their religious significance.

But some reader may have already registered a silent protest against the use of the term mystic as applied to Paul. He may have regarded it as smacking of disrespect. The contention that is here made is that in itself the term is clean, dignified, and respectful; albeit it has been greatly abused, and has had read into it a great variety of meanings. Looking at it etymologically, we find that it is derived from the Greek verb *μύω*, "to shut"; a mystic being one who keeps his mouth shut regarding the secrets into which he has been initiated; or one who shuts his eyes to external things that he may have a clearer vision of spiritual realities. We prefer the latter definition.

<sup>1</sup> *Paulinism*, Eng. trans., vol. i. p. 28.

If anyone wishes to see how far a reputable word may be degraded, let him read the chapter entitled "Psychology and Mysticism," in Hugo Münsterberg's recent volume on *Psychology and Life*. Every "faddist" who leaves the beaten path of empirical knowledge is there dubbed a mystic. In Münsterberg's mystical pantheon are some strange divinities. Of mystics of the purer and higher type he does not seem to have heard. Dr. R. C. Moberly, on the other hand, declares that the word mysticism has had a noble history; and while he deplores the fact that it has existed as a distinctive term chiefly to express a disproportion, he holds that "the spirit of mysticism is the true and essential Christianity."<sup>1</sup> He maintains that in spite of its "inherent ambiguity," "it is comparatively easy to say what the real truth of Christian mysticism is. It is, in fact, the doctrine, or rather the experience, of the Holy Ghost. It is the realisation of human personality as characterised by and communicated in the indwelling reality of the Spirit of Christ, which is God."<sup>2</sup>

When we come to define the term "mystical" as applied to Paul, the task is not an easy one. If a definition is wanted which shall include the whole range of his mystical teaching and experience, something wider than that of Dr.

<sup>1</sup> *Atonement and Personality*, p. 311.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 312.

Moberly must be furnished. If we might attempt to supply such a definition, we would say that Paul as a mystic was one who dwelt upon the inner side of spiritual things ; one who pushed on where logic limped and lagged, seeking the sunlit heights of direct vision, conscious union, and direct communion. In his ecstatic experiences he rose into that region where the soul sees "into the life of things," and where the use of words is transcended. These flights were only occasional. His ordinary experiences were of a more sober kind ; yet in the soberest of them there was a strong dash of mysticism. The knowledge he had of spiritual things was not inferential. It was immediate and conclusive. There was about it much that was incommunicable—for in all things which he saw and heard there was a deeper meaning than the plummet line of his reason could fathom, or his poor words convey to others. But there were things which he could tell in part,—things which others could understand, because they were typical ; and it is these things which form the rich deposit of mystical truth which he has left to the Church.

It would be wrong, however, to say that Paul was a pure mystic. He was many things besides. "Paul as he lives before us in his Epistles," says Dr. A. M. Fairbairn, "is a man

who holds many men within him—so many . . . that we may describe him as the most unintelligible to the analytical reason of a critic who has never warmed to the passion or been moved by the enthusiasm of humanity ; but the most intelligible of men to the man who has heard within himself the sound of all the voices that speak in man.”<sup>1</sup> When a classification of the New Testament writers is attempted, it is common to say that Paul represents the theological type of religion, Peter the traditional or ritualistic type, John the spiritual or mystical type, and James the ethical type. But this classification is apt to be misleading. In none of these writers does religion harden into a specific type. And least of all in Paul. With him religion is a many-sided thing ; and all that is here contended for is that in his conception of religion mysticism had a prominent place ; and that he regarded it as a legitimate phase of a normal Christian experience. According to Professor A. B. Bruce, “ faith-mysticism was a not less conspicuous feature of Paulism than the doctrine of objective righteousness or justification by faith.”<sup>2</sup>

Mysticism had also a prominent place in Paul’s own experience as a Christian man ;

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 440.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Paul’s Conception of Christianity*, p. 120.

and there can be no just appreciation of his teaching and of his character if the strong mystical element which pervaded both be left out of account. And yet its presence has often been grudgingly acknowledged. Dr. James Denney, from whom better things might have been expected, in his recent volume on *The Death of Christ*, fleers at mystical theology, and dismisses with a wave of the hand the whole subject of the mystical union of the believer with Christ, saying, "I do not care much for the expression 'mystical union,' for it has been much abused, and in St. Paul especially has led to much hasty misconstruction of the New Testament."<sup>1</sup> What a strange mental attitude this is, that can find in the abuse of a doctrine a reason for discarding it. It is at once admitted that the evils which have come from the excesses of mysticism are neither few nor small; but every form of religious thought and life has its dangers,—as witness the deadening influence of sacerdotalism and legalism,—and it is at least an open question whether of all the forms in which religious thought and life have been expressed, mysticism is not after all the least harmful. If some have found in the mystical teaching and experience of "beloved brother Paul" things hard to be understood, others

<sup>1</sup> P. 185.



have found in them a guiding light which has led them into the arcanum of Christian truth and experience ; and there is small wonder that they persist in clinging to the conviction that his sane and well-balanced views of the mystical life constitute not the least important part of the rich inheritance of truth which he has left the Church. To minify the mystical union of the believing soul with Christ is to minify the very thing in which, according to Paul, the redeeming work of Christ is consummated. In striking contrast to Dr. Denney, Pfeiderer, although of the extreme rationalistic school, penetrating with clear insight into the heart of Paulinism, says ,“ Paul’s personal relation to the cross is never a mere relation of objective theory, but always, at the same time, and essentially, the relation of the subjective union of the inmost feelings with the Crucified, a mystic communion with the death on the Cross and with Christ risen.”<sup>1</sup>

Strange to say, the philosophers have been more appreciative of mysticism than the theologians. They have been ready to see and to say that “ the mystics are the only thorough-going empiricists ” ; that, like the scientists, “ they base everything upon experience ” ; that they bring the soul into “ the presence of the

<sup>1</sup> *Paulinism*, vol. i. p. 17.

unmediated fact," and allow it to speak for itself. These quotations from Professor Josiah Royce are followed by the declaration that "mysticism has been the ferment of the faiths, the forerunner of spiritual liberty, the inaccessible refuge of the nobler heretics; the inspirer, through poetry, of countless youth, who know no metaphysics; the teacher, through devotional books, of the despairing; the comforter of those who are weary of finitude. It has determined, directly or indirectly, more than one-half of the technical theology of the Church."<sup>1</sup> He affirms that nobody can understand a large part of religion without understanding mysticism.

The revival of interest in the study of mysticism which is taking place in the present day, alike within the sphere of psychology and theology, is one of the most significant signs of the times. Mysticism is one of the subjects which refuses to be excluded from the domain of human investigation. Thrust out of the door, it has come back by the window; banished from the Church, it has found a home in many of the modern cults. Those sporadic movements outside of the Church, which are scornfully passed over as unworthy of serious study, have a deeper source and a more significant meaning than many of us imagine. They mark reactions

<sup>1</sup> *The World and the Individual*, p. 85.

from legalism and sacerdotalism in religion, and from materialism in life. Grant, if you please, that the element of truth which they contain is "but one half-pennyworth of bread to an intolerable deal of sack," that morsel of bread happens to be of the kind for which many have a hankering. And if the Church fails to supply it, they will sorrowfully go outside her pale to get it. Within the sphere of Christian thought there is the same reaction. Just after Ritschl had done his utmost to construct "a religion without mysticism, and a theology without metaphysics," Professor James, the eminent empirical psychologist, came along and stoutly maintained that "personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the main value of Professor James' book, from which the above quotation is made, is that it recognises the reality of spiritual phenomena, and regards the whole realm of religious experience as a proper sphere of scientific investigation. This admission, if tardily made, is of great importance. It is a confirmation from a new quarter, of what a large class of thinkers have all along been contending for. We would not, however, go the length of Professor James in saying that "personal experience always has its root and

<sup>1</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 185.

centre in mystical states of consciousness." There is a non-mystical as well as a mystical experience, and the former is more common than the latter. All that is claimed is that the mystical form is the one by which many of the most eminent servants of God have been characterised. And some minds can be religious only in a mystical way.

It is true that those mystical states of consciousness, in which religious experience has its root and centre, are often very nebulous and dim. There are some who have very little spiritual susceptibility, the mystical element in them is weak—the things of the unseen realm hardly appeal to them. This class serve the Lord, not because of any vision of glory that has come to them, but because duty demands it. Like Robertson of Brighton, they anchor their souls in the principle that whether life's sky be dark or bright, it must be right to do right. Yet it is an over-statement of the case to say with Coleridge, that every man is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian—an idealist or a realist. There is no person so utterly prosaic that he cannot appreciate things mystical, any more than one who is tone deaf can appreciate music, or than one who is colour blind can appreciate the gorgeous hues of a summer sunset. There is no soul that cannot be stirred by the touch of God, there is no soul that cannot be

impressed by a sense of the spiritual and the eternal. Latent powers of spiritual feeling and appreciation are in every man, but they need cultivation. It is this side of man's higher self—the side that touches the infinities—that is generally neglected. The mystical gift, instead of being increased by using, is tied up in a napkin. There is small danger in the present day that the mystical side of religion will get undue attention. A modern writer, who evidently imagines that the mystical and the unpractical are one and the same, remarks that "in this world we need not only wings for the sky, but also a stout pair of boots for the paving-stones." This is true; but the emphasis is wrongly placed, inasmuch as there are more people who fail to provide themselves with wings than with boots.

It is generally admitted that every Christian experiences more than he can logically formulate or fully express. Herrmann, who cannot be charged with any mystical leaning, admits that "on one point we agree, that the inner life of religion is ultimately something mysterious and incommunicable."<sup>1</sup> It is a great deep, "unplumbed by the discursive intellect." Yet finding, as he fully believes, this "immediacy of relationship with the supernatural" only in and through the historical revelation, he denies

<sup>1</sup> *The Communion of the Christian with God*, p. 380.

its mystical quality altogether. What he really does is to kick away the scaffolding when the top of the spire is reached. The experience generated by the historical revelation, consisting as it does in the direct, personal communion of the soul with God, is undoubtedly mystical. That it has its norm in the historical revelation does not make it less so.

With most Christians the beginning of the Christian life is mystical. It has in it something of "the romance of religion." "Your young men shall see visions," is the promise of the new dispensation. It is often in youth that we are touched most profoundly with the poetical interpretation of the religious life. Who would imagine that hard, grasping business man, who is the incarnation of fat dividends, to have been in early youth "by a vision splendid on his way attended"; that to him the heavens were opened; that his dull prosaic life was for a glorious moment lifted up into the beatific harmonies, and his heart filled and fired with lofty aims. It is to him a bitter reflection that life's vision has faded, and that he has fallen so far below the lofty ideals and noble aims of his early youth.

Christian hymnology testifies to the mystical element in Christian experience. When the climax of worship is reached in praise, the mood of the Church is mystical. When men touch the deep



things of the spiritual life, they are for the time being mystics. The experience a man has with his Lord at conversion has in it a mystical quality. The inward witness of the Spirit to which the Methodist people, in the days of their greatest power, gave emphasis, was a mystical experience. So also was the "inner light" of the early Quakers; which, before it passed from an experience to a dogma, enabled them to strongly move the hearts of men. Those great struggles—like our Lord's temptation in the wilderness—when, within the soul, the battle is fought out with the invisible powers of evil, are mystical experiences. Those special baptisms of the Spirit to which many Christians have testified are purely mystical experiences. They belong to the sphere of things in which the spirit of man is lost in the Spirit of God. Man is a spiritual being, dwelling in a spiritual universe, and there is no telling when, or at what point, the glories or the terrors of the spiritual world will break in upon his soul. He has at least the capacity for experiencing the spiritual.

For a striking illustration of how a man of a severely Pauline type may become the subject of pronounced mystical experience, turn to the account given by President Finney of a crisis in his religious life, when he received "a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost." He says, "Without

any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity going through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves of liquid love ; for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love ; and I do not know but I should say, I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart. These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me. I said, Lord, I cannot bear any more ; yet I had no fear of death.”<sup>1</sup> Never did the most fully-fledged mystic speak more positively of direct contact with God, or portray more boldly his spiritual experience, in physical terms, than this young American lawyer. How much of his experience was due to overwrought nerves, let the physician

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs*, pp. 20, 21.

or the psychologist answer ; that there was at the heart of it a potent energy which changed his whole nature, his after life abundantly testified.

There is a growing conviction that we need in the present day to give more attention to the mystical side of Christian life. The outside things are being over-emphasised, while the interior things are given a subordinate place. Dr. Alexander Maclaren of Manchester, with true prophetic insight, has put on record his profound sense of the value of the mystical element in religion. Speaking on the subject of "Evangelical Mysticism," he deplores the fact that the mystical truths of the New Testament have not received the proportionate prominence in our experience which they demand. "They are not denied nor altogether ignored, but surely it is plain that they are relegated to a more obscure position than they hold in Gospel and Epistle, and are handled hesitatingly and unfrequently."<sup>1</sup> Here is undoubtedly a faithful and true witness. And it is to the needed task of bringing into proper perspective this neglected part of Christian truth and testimony, especially as found in the writings of Paul, that the present treatise is a humble contribution.

<sup>1</sup> Presidential Address before the Baptist Union of Great Britain in 1901.

## CHAPTER II.

### A RELIGIOUS MYSTIC.

MYSTICISM may be divided into two parts, namely, philosophical and religious. "Religious mysticism," as Professor James truly says, "is only one half of mysticism." Philosophical or speculative mysticism was cradled in Eastern pantheism. Its central conception is that of an all-pervading presence, in which all things are one. It makes all things the manifestation of the divine unity. The philosophical monism of the East passed over into Europe, and found definite embodiment in the philosophy of Plato. Afterwards it entered into Christianity through Neo-Platonism. With Plato the human soul was looked upon as a part of the divine nature, a spark from the eternal fire, an angel imprisoned in a house of clay. The chief end of life was made to consist of freeing the soul from the darkness and bondage to which it has been subjected. This emancipation might be obtained in two ways—by

crushing out all animal desire, or by withdrawing the soul from all objects of sense and fixing its contemplation upon sublunary things, so that it may sit in heavenly places, while the body wallows in the mire of sensuality.

Both methods are equally ruinous. They push a philosophy, which has in it a great element of truth, to the point where it becomes "pro-curess to the Lords of hell." The smothered appetites and passions are not extinguished, but may flare up at any moment under a sudden gust of temptation. The pendulum which has swung to the extreme of spiritual ecstasy may swing back to the extreme of sensual desire. The soul of man is not made in watertight compartments. The division walls which exist between flesh and spirit may unexpectedly give way, and the purity of the soul be ineffaceably stained by the impurity of the flesh.

Great harm has often come from confounding philosophical mysticism with religious mysticism. The two are radically distinct in their spirit and aims. The philosophic mystic covets knowledge, the religious mystic covets holiness ; with the one knowledge is an end, with the other it is a mean to an end. With the philosophical mystic the main object of quest is the essential essence and ultimate reality of things ; with the religious mystic the main object of quest

is actual and immediate contact with God,—he seeks to come face to face with God, meeting Him as spirit with spirit, with nothing standing between. If the philosophical mystic seeks God at all, he seeks Him as the ultimate principle of things, or as the solution of the riddle of the universe, and not as a living, loving, personal being, with whom he can hold communion; he seeks Him that he may wonder, not that he may worship; he seeks Him for the gratification of the intellect, not for the satisfaction of the heart. He that is least in the kingdom of religious mysticism is greater than he who is highest in the kingdom of philosophical mysticism. He belongs to a higher spiritual grade.

Paul was a religious mystic. With the occult systems of Eastern pantheism he had no sympathy whatever. His mysticism was to him something more than a philosophy. It was a religion. It was the thing by which he lived. He sought God with a moral intent. God was to him more than an intellectual necessity; He was the resting-place of his heart.

1. *As a religious mystic Paul was struck through and through with the sense of the existence of the living God.*—To him God was “the absolute principle of all reality,” the ultimate ground of being, on whom all things rest, and in whom all things live. In His presence, as the deep



and awful mystery of the universe, he stood with bared head and with trembling heart, exclaiming, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!" (Rom. xi. 33).

Paul's reverence came from his recognition of something inscrutable in God. What was revealed was only a small part of what was unrevealed. His thoughts ever rose from the manifested to the unmanifested God. God was better than his best thought of Him, greater than his greatest thought of Him. Although in one sense lofty and remote, He was in another sense so close and intimate that He was the very element in which he lived. He was surrounded by Him as the pebble in the brook is surrounded by water. This truth he distinctly declares in his sermon on the Hill of Mars to the men of Athens; when, standing upon purely naturalistic ground, he says of the Most High, "He is not far from each one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28). Here he speaks in the language of a true mystic. He looks upon all life as "embraced in the essential essence" of the Godhead. God is the enveloping atmosphere from which all men draw their life; the spring of all their activity; the source of their very existence.

Pantheistic, do you say? Yes, but after a sane and scientific fashion.

Under all conditions Paul seems to have been aware of God. He had a sense of the divine life enfolding his own. He enjoyed not merely occasional flashes of the consciousness of God's presence, he dwelt with Him, he walked with Him, he talked with Him "face toward face." He had what the old Puritan Fathers were wont to call "a realising sense of the divine presence"; or what the Quakers called "an experience of God"; or what the mystics called "a sweet fruition of God." Like Brother Lawrence of a later day, he lived in the practice of the Divine presence until he became as conscious of God as he was of himself.

In one of the crises of his life, when he was deserted by his friends, he testifies, "the Lord stood by me, and strengthened me" (2 Tim. iv. 17). When told that he must go to Rome and witness for the Master before Cæsar, it is recorded that "the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer" (Acts xxiii. 11). The exact nature of these theophanies we are not careful to determine. They at least show that Paul enjoyed a vivid realisation of God's immediate presence; a vital sense of personal relationship; and that something went from God into him, giving him strength and comfort in the conflict of life. He felt

upon him and around him the movement of God—the surging tides of the Spirit ; and opening his soul to the in-breaking, in-rushing waters, he became filled with the life of God as the bays of the ocean are filled with its in-sweeping tide. How did he gain assuring evidence of the divine in-filling presence ? As the underground roots gain evidence that spring has come by a thrill of life ; or as a man gains evidence of the sun's existence when he is experiencing its light and warmth.

2. *In Paul's scheme of thought, God was both transcendent and immanent.*—He was looked upon as distinct from the world, and yet in it ; above it, and yet within it ; throned above the highest heavens, yet filling the universe with His presence. We find the blending of these two conceptions in his words, “ One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all ” (Eph. iv. 6). These are profound words. They present God as the supreme unity. The unity of God was an essential postulate of all Paul's thinking. He was no tri-theist. He believed in “ one God,” who is variously manifested. In this text God is set forth not as an abstraction or principle, but as a living, self-conscious Being. He is “ over all ” ; above them, and beyond them, looking down upon them, lovingly bending over them, a personal

friend to whom they can pray, a Being whose love can satisfy their soul's deepest wants. He is "through all," filling the universe with His pervasive life, the vivifying power in nature, the fountain of spiritual life in man. He is "in all," dwelling in all souls as the immanent ground of their life, and making it possible that they rise up into the enjoyment of conscious fellowship with Him.

Very important is the added thought that the one God who is over all, through all, and in all is "the God and Father of all." "God" is the common name; it is a name into which almost anything can be read, a name which may even be impersonal; Father is a name which implies personal and affectional relations. It embodies the highest conception of God which can be gathered from our knowledge of earthly relationships. It is the divine name which constituted the most distinct contribution of Jesus to religious thought. Before His coming the term "father" was sometimes used in reference to God, but generally in a poetic sense. The Father of Jesus was not the limited tribal-father of the Hebrew, nor the impersonal "Heaven-Father" of the Hindoo, nor the vague "Father and Framer of the universe" of Plato; He was a living being, holding close and personal relations with all the sons of men. This is

Paul's conception of God ; and it is a conception which must be carried over, whether we think of Him as transcendent or immanent. The poet Tennyson says that to take it away is to "take away the backbone of the world." The God who is over all is the Father of all ; the God who is through all is the Father of all ; the God who is in all is the Father of all. This is the God to whom every man may come, claiming a child's place, a child's privileges, a child's blessing.

"And what though earth and sea His glory do proc'aim,  
Though on the stars is writ that great and glorious name ;  
Yea—hear me, Son of man—with tears mine eyes are dim,  
I cannot read the word that calls me after Him ;  
I say it after Thee, with faltering voice and weak,  
Father of Jesus Christ—this is the God I seek."

One of the baneful mistakes of religious mysticism has been that it has pushed to an extreme the doctrine of the divine immanence, and has repudiated or ignored the doctrine of the divine transcendence, thereby weakening the sense of personality and of sin. This one-sidedness is to be accounted for on the ground that mysticism has generally been a rebound from the thought of a God outside the world. Upon this conception of God the theology of the past has unfortunately been largely built up. God has been looked upon as an absentee, dwelling in a remote heaven, seated upon a throne from which he looks down upon the children of men.

The effort of man has been to get near to this distant being. The cry of the soul has been, "O that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down!" Men have sought in every possible way to get on the good side of this august potentate, that they might secure his special favour and intervention. When Paul spoke of God as one "who is over all, and through all, and in all," he saw Him not merely as a transcendent Being who might come to men, but as the immanent Being who abides for ever near. God was to him the soul of the universe. In the throb of universal life he found the evidence of His pervasive presence. It was the very essence of his creed

"That not a breath of life can be,  
O Fount of Being, save from Thee,"

and that the controlling power of God, as the indwelling life of man and of the world, must come from within rather than from without.

In a complete scheme of religious thought these two conceptions of God are united. Transcendence and immanence are two hemispheres which, when joined together, form the full and complete conception of God. The tendency is for sinful men to put God far away, to banish Him to some distant heaven, to remove Him as far as possible from their lives; hence the value of Paul's mystical message touching the univer-



salinity of the divine presence, and especially of the presence of God in the heart of man. It opposes the ecclesiasticism which conceives of God as a transcendental being to be known only through an outward supernatural revelation; and stands for the relation of the individual soul to God; claiming, as Dr. Caird has done, that room ought to be made within the consciousness of man for the consciousness of God. With this agree the words of Eckhart, the Father of German mysticism, "God is nigh unto us, but we are far from Him; God is within, but we are without; God is at home, but we are strangers." To the same effect are the words of Fenelon, the French mystic, "Thou art, O Father, so really within ourselves, where we seldom or never look, that Thou art to us a hidden God." This has ever been the distinctive testimony of religious mysticism; and it is one of the neglected truths which the present age is recovering. It is at present a vital centre of reorganisation in Christian doctrine. It brings God closer to the world; it shows that man is not alien to God, but that in Him he has his true life; it shows that "there is between all men and the Infinite an indestructible affinity, an essential answerableness as of the image of the original";<sup>1</sup> it reveals within man an ever-flowing spring of

<sup>1</sup> *Ultimate Conceptions of Faith*, George A. Gordon, p. 181.

goodness, and shows that man, instead of being religious from outward pressure, is religious from inward impulsion. It has also very obvious sociological applications. But that which gives it the greatest value to many is that it dignifies human nature, and glorifies the whole of human life. It makes God as truly present with the humblest man as He was with Moses on the Mount. It fills the common life full of God. It errs, however, when it falls into a pantheistic identification of nature with God, or of man with God. From this tendency even Eckhart was not altogether free, as is evident from his words to the effect that "in its true existence every creature is not only a revelation of God but a part of Him, and that the true object of life is to strip off all illusions and deceptions, and return into the one great being of God." A balanced system of thought like that of Paul's, while recognising the divine life of the immanent God as flowing continually into the world, holds firmly to the twin ideas of divine personality, and the personal conscious communion of man with God as that of a child with a father; it sees in man's deepest yearnings a cry for the love and fellowship of the Eternal Father; it sees in God not only a Presence melting through our moods, but also a Presence objective to our souls, an object of faith, of love, and of adoring reverence.

3. *As a religious mystic he believed that he possessed "a perception of the Infinite."*—He was "a God-seeing man"; a man who saw God in everything, and everything in God. He endured the heaviest trials, and fulfilled the hardest tasks, "as seeing Him who is invisible." The God who "stood by him," stood out before his mental eye as a living reality. His perception of God was not a thing of inference, but of immediate and personal knowledge; or rather of intuition, For, as Romanes has said, "God is knowable (if knowable at all) by intuition, not by reason."<sup>1</sup> When he spoke of "knowing God," he meant something more than knowing about Him; he meant knowing God Himself in the essential qualities of His character, but not in His essential essence; for in that sense he speaks of Him as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no one hath seen nor can see" (1 Tim. vi. 15, 16). The vision of God which he regarded as possible, having a moral quality, is given to him who keeps the windows of his soul clear and bright. This is in accordance with the Master's words, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"; of which words those of the Apostle John, "He that doeth evil hath not seen God" (3 Ep. 11),

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 146.

are an echo. It is also in harmony with the entire trend of God's historical revelation to man; which shows that He makes special disclosures of Himself to those who are prepared to receive them.

With Paul faith is "a supra-rational faculty"—a measure of which God has dealt out to every man (1 Cor. xii. 9). It is that power by which we pierce the veil of sense which hides the spiritual from us. It is spiritual vision, spiritual perception, the power of spiritual discernment. It has been well defined as "an interior power by which God may be more truly known than external objects are known by the bodily senses."<sup>1</sup> We speak of it in popular language as the eye of the soul, or as the window by which we look out upon the spiritual universe which surrounds us. In the words, "We walk by faith and not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7), Paul runs a contrast between spiritual and bodily vision. In treading the heavenly way, we walk not by what the eye of the body sees, but by what the eye of faith sees. Faith is that power which in its upward flight

"bids the sense good-bye,  
Lifting the spirit at a bound  
Beyond the frontiers of the eye."

It is to the spiritual world what sight is to the natural world. It sees the unseen, and brings

<sup>1</sup> Dr. James Morison, *Saving Faith*, p. 60.

its glories into the soul. It is "the substance of" (literally, that which stands under) "things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Its ultimate object is not the Bible, but the God of the Bible. It ever exclaims,

"Beyond the sacred page, I see Thee, Lord!"

Not merely *in*, but *through* the Word it sees God. He is the supreme object of its quest, and it dares not halt until it finds Him.

The wider term "revelation" which Paul so frequently employs in reference to God, carries with it the idea of the unveiling to sight of that which is hidden. God "shows" Himself to man. When He is seen, when He is known, the divine life begins. So that Auguste Sabatier is correct in defining religion as "simply the subjective revelation of God in man."<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, in the beginning of his studies in comparative religion, found in "the perception of the Infinite" "the source of all religion, human and divine"; but afterwards he modified his position, saying that the source of religion is found in "a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable."<sup>2</sup> There is no antagonism whatever between these two positions. The longing of man after the knowledge of the Infinite must be measurably met before there is any religious

<sup>1</sup> *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religions of India*, p. 23.

life ; the sense of divine dependence, in which Schleiermacher discovers the root of all religion, must lead to the discovery of something upon which to lean ; man must worship what he finds. So that we may reverse the words which Pascal represents God as addressing to man, "Thou wouldst not seek Me hadst thou not already found Me," and say, "Thou wouldst not seek Me had I not already found thee." For God must ever answer man's quest. His half concealments are for the purpose of whetting the desire for more perfect knowledge. It was to Paul the very essence of God's moral life that He should be self-revealing—self-communicating ; and it was his constant plaint that so many turn away their eyes from beholding the revelations of "the glory of the incorruptible God," which is ever being vouchsafed to man.

4. *As a religious mystic Paul sought direct communion with God.*—The end for which he tried to get near the God who is behind all things was that he might enter into personal fellowship with Him. God was to him a wise and powerful Being who honoured him with His friendship. He brought to Him all the burdens of his heart, and laid them at His feet. He lived in the very atmosphere of His presence, praying to Him "without ceasing" (1 Thess. v. 17). Even in his most active hours his soul was upon its knees.



His prayer was sometimes ejaculatory, but oftener it was voiceless, consisting of "the heart's desire" unvocalised. Through the whole of his life it ran like an underground stream, coming only occasionally to the surface, but everywhere revealing itself by the upspringing verdure which followed in its course.

The habit of prayer gave to Paul a strong grip upon the personality of God,—a thing which many mystics have, to their sorrow, lost. The one with whom he held communion was "the living God," from whose love no one could ever separate him. When the storm fell he buried his head in God's bosom ; when it was over he sunned his soul in the light of His countenance. In the heavens which bent above him there was a listening ear and an all-seeing eye. He possessed in full measure that sense of divine personality without which prayer is an absurdity. For, as Dr. Maudsley has said, "When a personal Deity has gradually dislimned, evaporated into formless mist, and finally melted away into impersonal absolute, naturally the difficulty for mankind will be how to love It which is no longer Him, and to pray to It as to Him."<sup>1</sup> This consummation Dr. Maudsley cannot contemplate without a tinge of sadness ; by most it cannot be contemplated without dismay.

<sup>1</sup> *Natural Causes and Natural Seemings*, p. 145.

When the mediæval Church had emphasised the distance between man and God, the German mystics rendered an invaluable service by restoring the Pauline doctrine of "the intimacy and immediacy" of divine union and communion; and Luther, who drank deep at the well of mysticism, made as the regnant thought of his teaching "the natural affinity of the soul, through all its sin, for God, and of God for the human soul; and the consequent possibility of an immediate relation between the two."<sup>1</sup> This doctrine of the direct communion of the soul with God the Church of to-day needs to recover, that reviving streams may break out in desert places—causing them to blossom as the rose.

5. *As a religious mystic Paul cultivated a sense of contact with the unseen and the eternal.*—The spiritual world was to him the background of this earthly life. He felt that he lived in two worlds, an outward phenomenal world and a supersensible world which impinges upon it, and to which it opens out. The visible, instead of being the real, was only the sign of the real. Underneath the visible lay the invisible; underneath the phenomenal lay the real. The one was the passing shadow, the other the abiding substance of which the phenomenal was but "a blurred reflection." This thought Paul brings

<sup>1</sup> *Personality Human and Divine*, R. J. Illingworth, M.A., p. 17.

clearly out in the statement, "the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 31). Everything in the external world that has form and shape, everything that the eye can see, is undergoing constant transmutation, and shall finally pass away. Time is stripping off the world's outward dress, and only the life within, the essence of things, shall remain. The spiritual alone is eternal.

This truth was looked upon by Paul from a purely ethical point of view. Because this world is a passing show, life's trials were to him as the small dust on the balance. He contemplated its dissolution without foreboding, inasmuch as he is not looking "at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. iv. 18). The unseen universe he interpreted spiritually, and believed that, like the world he saw, it involved spiritual relationships and existed for spiritual ends.

It is in the spiritual interpretation of the universe that William Ralph Inge finds the essential thing in mysticism. In his masterly book on *Christian Mysticism*, which, in spite of a pervading spirit of unsympathetic mistrust, supersedes all that has been written on the subject, starting from the premise that our

consciousness of the life beyond is the raw material of all religion, he defines religion as being "the attempt to realise in thought and feeling the immanence of the temporal in the eternal."<sup>1</sup> This definition, although lacking in comprehensiveness, as a definition of religious mysticism in general, lays hold of one of its essential elements. It gives a religious interpretation to nature, making it lie embosomed within the circle of the spiritual world. It also gives a religious interpretation to life ; freeing it from the dominance of gross materialism ; according to man his rightful place as a spiritual being, dwelling in a spiritual universe, and making the consciousness of his relation to his spiritual habitat his highest privilege and glory.

Man is thus looked upon as under "the power of an endless life." He is in eternity now as much as he ever shall be. Heaven is not beyond the sky, nor is hell an abyss beneath his feet ; they are present conditions into which he can enter ; or, if you will, they are conditions which now may enter him. With the half materialistic and half mystic Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, he can say :

"I sent my soul through the Invisible,  
Some letter of the After-life to spell,  
And by and by my soul returned to me  
And answered, "I Myself am heaven and hell."

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<sup>1</sup> P. 5.

Yet the after-life is not to be overlooked. In Paul's thought it occupied a large place. But the vision of it is veiled. The medium through which it is seen is opaque. Adopting a popular illusion, "which regards the object, really seen behind a mirror, as seen through it," Paul says, "We see through a mirror darkly" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). This metaphor, which afterwards became a favourite one with the mystics, indicates that the reflection of heavenly things is at best dim and obscure, like the objects seen in an ancient mirror. We see them in a half-light, as standing in a mist. We know them only "in part." The similitudes which are employed to set them forth conceal more of truth than they reveal. God could not reveal them all at once, nor could we take them in all at once. The light in which we see them is one that "shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The heavenly world responds to those who seek it. It bends low to every aspiring soul. Between man and the unseen world there exists the same "indestructible affinity and essential answerableness" that exists between man and God. Jesus called heaven the Father's house; and in the Father's house all His children will feel at home. It was made for them and they for it. Paul says "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). To it we belong. Into its em-

ployments and enjoyments we shall naturally fit. We shall find ourselves in unison with its moral order. And now when we see it from afar we long for it as the goal of our hopes (Col. i. 5), the ultimate object of our desires (2 Tim. iv. 18).

Sometimes the heavenly vision comes into greater distinctness late in life :

“ 'Tis the sunset of life gives us mystical lore.”

“ In the evening time there is the vision ” :

“ The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,  
Lets in new light through chinks that time has made.”

WALLER.

The veil of sense grows thinner as the realities of the eternal world draw nearer ; the glory streams from the open gate, and the light that never was on sea or land floods the soul. Leaning upon his battered shield, when the conflict of life was over, the aged warrior Paul, with happy memories of the past and with entrancing prospects for the future, exclaimed, “ I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith : henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not only to me, but also to all them that love His appearing ” (2 Tim. iv. 6-8). This experience of the spirit



world comes when the hand of death is locking up the senses, and the soul is being prepared for its great awakening. Then

“ There is a murmur in the soul  
That tells of the world to be,  
As travellers hear the billows roll  
Before they reach the sea.”

That the transition may not be too sudden, God gives fore-gleams of what is coming ; and as the soul lingers on the borderland where two worlds meet, he is partly in the one before he is altogether out of the other. As earth recedes and heaven draws nearer, he may be heard saying :

“ I hear a voice you cannot hear,  
Which says, I must not stay ;  
I see a hand you cannot see,  
Which beckons me away.”

And as he closes his eyes upon this world “ flights of angels sing him to his rest.”

6. *As a religious mystic Paul tells of an extraordinary revelation with which God had favoured him.*—This happened about six years after his conversion. Speaking of himself, modestly and hesitatingly, in the third person ; and speaking at all only because he was forced to do so in order to repel the charge that he was not a divinely called apostle, he says, “ I must needs glory, though it is not expedient ; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not ; God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not ; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. xii. 1-4). The nature of this experience was to Paul himself incomprehensible. In all probability it was a state of trance. To speak of it as an epileptic fit is to treat it with disdain, and to put it outside the circle of religious consideration. Connected with it there were doubtless certain pathological conditions, but these concern the psychological expert more than the theologian. During its continuance there was a suspension of normal consciousness. "In that ecstasy," says Meyer, "his lower consciousness had so utterly fallen into abeyance, that he could not afterwards tell whether this had taken place by means of a temporary withdrawal of his spirit, or whether his whole person, body included, had been snatched away." And inasmuch as self-activity had ceased, he dared not boast. He was simply the sensitive plate upon which heavenly things impressed their image, the conducting wire along which the Divine Mind flashed its message. He made no use of this experience as the means

of convincing others. For fourteen years he had kept silent about it. It was something which had been given to him alone, to confirm his faith, and inspire him with courage and hope in his arduous work. It was the white stone of which St. John speaks, on which there is "a new name written, which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it" (Rev. ii. 17). For one glorious hour he had stood upon the heights; and for years afterwards the remembrance of that rapturous experience abode in his memory as the fragrance of precious ointment.

The reference to current conceptions of "the third heaven" and "Paradise" show that the colouring of his vision was derived from his Jewish environment, just as our dreams are coloured by waking thoughts; but the substance of the vision transcended all the ordinary forms of thought. Hence it was "unspeakable," and "not lawful for a man to utter." His lips were sealed, as were the lips of Lazarus after he had been called back from the place of the dead, partly because the things which he had seen and heard transcended the power of human language to express, and also because they belonged to those deep experiences of which Frederick W. Robertson aptly says, "There are transfiguration moments, bridal hours of the soul; and not easily forgiven are those who

would utter the secrets of its high intercourse with their Lord. There is a certain spiritual indelicacy in persons that cannot perceive that not everything which is a matter of experience and knowledge is therefore a subject for conversation. You cannot discuss such subjects without vulgarising them.”<sup>1</sup> Another reason why he forebore to tell the great secrets of the universe that had been disclosed to him, was lest anyone should account of him above what he saw him to be, or heard from him. Reverting to his previous form of address, in the first person, he says, “By reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations—wherefore, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch” (2 Cor. xii. 7). This humbling affliction, whatever was its nature, did its work. It saved him from spiritual pride, of which he was in great danger, because of the honour which had been accorded him. It reminded him of his frailty, and caused him to cling for support to the Everlasting arm. Thrice he prayed that this infirmity might be taken away, but his prayer was not granted, because it was as much needed as the ballast of a balloon, which keeps it from ascending into rarefied air, in which no mortal

<sup>1</sup> *Expository Lectures on Corinthians, in loco.*

can live. Over this infirmity Paul triumphed, making it redound to his spiritual profit ; but to the end he had, as Robertson remarks, “ a divided experience of two selves, two Pauls, one Paul in the third heaven, enjoying beatific visions ; another yet on earth, struggling, tempted, tried, and buffeted by Satan.”

There are many who have had similar experiences to that of Paul, but they say little about them ; holding them as secrets between themselves and their Lord. Plotinus, less modest, says that he enjoyed this experience thrice, Paul only once. All that these silent saints care to tell is that in some moment, beautiful and rare—perhaps out of the darkness of deep discouragement—they have caught a glimpse of the gates of gold, and have heard the echo of the heavenly harmonies. They have sat in heavenly places, and have had some personal experience of the heavenly world. Like the German philosopher who said that he believed in hell because he had been there, they believe in heaven because they have been there. The people of Dante’s day pointed to him as the man who had been in hell. Paul might have been pointed to as the man who had been in heaven. Nor is he the only one who could bear that witness.

There are others to whom this experience has

come "in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man" (Job xxxiii. 15). At that mystical moment, when the soul is being freed from the restrictions of the body, the glory of the eternal world breaks into it. Of this experience the poet Henry Vaughan has said:

"As Angels in some brighter dreams  
Call to the soul when man doth sleep;  
So some strange thoughts transcend our wonted themes,  
And into glory peep."

This heavenly vision by which all men are haunted is given to those alone who are prepared to receive it. But, alas! how many are blind to the vision which God has brought to them! "God speaketh in one way, yea in two, though man regardeth it not" (Job xxxiii. 14). He enters man by every avenue, seeking to refresh his weary, toil-worn spirit with fore-glimpses of his future inheritance.

7. *As a religious mystic Paul believed in the existence of good and bad angels, the one class the friends, the other the foes, of the good.*—In the working out of this belief he shows the influence of his Rabbinical training. His doctrine of angelology has a distinctly Jewish flavour. It is difficult, however, to tell just how far he really commits himself to current speculations touching angelic existences. He certainly does not hesitate to make use of popular beliefs for practical ends,



but he stops short of the fantastic theories in which the imagination of Jewish theologians ran riot. He accepts the idea of ranks of angels elaborated in Apocalyptic literature, and represents "a completely organised life lying outside of material surroundings, and largely independent of it." The region which these hierarchies of spiritual beings people is the upper air. They are near enough to exercise a malign or a benignant influence upon human affairs. To their entrance the world lies open. The soul of man is the prize which holds them at strife. In a remarkable passage Paul uses eight separate terms to describe these unseen forces. "I am persuaded," he says, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39). His contention is that all the alien forces in earth and hell marshalled against the Christian shall not be able to dislodge him from his hiding-place in the Eternal Love.

Speaking as a Pharisee, Paul openly announced his belief in a resurrection, in angels, and in spirits (see Acts xxiii. 8). He declared also that in his sufferings endured for the kingdom's sake he was "a spectacle to men and to angels"

(1 Cor. iv. 9). His fatherly counsels to his spiritual son Timothy he enforces with the words, "I charge thee before the elect angels" (1 Tim. v. 21)—that is, the holy angels who are the chosen attendants and ministers of God. The Corinthian women he admonishes not to violate the established laws of social decorum by appearing unveiled in public, or praying with head uncovered, "because of the angels" (1 Cor. xi. 10)—that is, because of the presence of angels who were spectators of their deeds. Remembering that they were surrounded by a great cloud of unseen witnesses, they were to be careful to do nothing irregular or indecent, so as to excite bad angels to wantonness, or grieve good angels by their unseemly behaviour.

The good angels, who are God's agents and man's helpers, perform a great variety of service. Paul says that by their ministration the law was given (Gal. iii. 19). This stamped the Old Covenant as inferior to the New, the latter being given by God direct. Under the Old Testament dispensation God did not come into immediate contact with men, but acted through intermediaries, who carried out the purposes of His will. But although, in the New Testament, the presence of the Holy Spirit is substituted for "the angel of His presence," angels do not pass altogether out. They keep flitting before

our view, playing their part as "ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation" (Heb. i. 1). Paul himself records that when shipwrecked on his way to appeal to Cæsar, "There stood by me an angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not" (Acts xxvii. 23). This heavenly visitor brought him assurance of Heaven's protection and guidance in the hour of his deep distress. He came to stand between him and danger, and enable him to accomplish his mission to Rome.

Regarding angels who are the foes of the good, Paul has this word of warning and admonition: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand" (Eph. vi. 12, 13). In the irrepressible conflict with evil, expressed in all languages and religions, the Apostle made more of the forces of the invisible world than the forces of the visible world. He was more afraid of the unseen adversaries than of evil men who are their agents. To him the unseen forces were formidable and crafty; and instead of ignoring or denying their existence he would have us be vigilant that we be not

overcome by their wiles. He does not direct us to fight against windmills, or to thrust our swords into shadows. He certainly meant to have us regard our unseen antagonists as real. Clothing ourselves in the panoply of heaven, he would have us repel their assaults, never ceasing to wrestle against them until we have put them under our feet.

Much has been lost by the Church of to-day in allowing the New Testament doctrine of angels to become a dead letter. A measure of faith in their existence still lingers in the popular belief in guardian angels. The Church still sings :

“ Onward, Christian, though the region  
Where thou art be drear and lone ;  
God has set a guardian legion  
Very near thee ; press thou on.”

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

We also still occasionally ask that holy angels may guard our pillow in our sleeping hours, and that they may take charge of us when we go forth to the duties of the day. But, as a rule, we look upon the angels as having gone out of business so far as their relation to mundane things is concerned. To many they have ceased to be living entities, and have become the personification of natural forces. The simple faith expressed in Luther's words, “ The dear angels take our prayers up to heaven, and bring us back the message that our prayers are heard,” is

largely a thing of the past. If it is a faith well founded, we ought to strive to recover it. If the angels are still really at work within the sphere of earthly influence, we ought to know it. If some of them are our unseen enemies, working for our destruction, we ought to find out their devices, and resist them steadfastly in the faith. If others are our secret allies, upon whom we can depend when the conflict rages, we ought to welcome their aid, saying :

“These are Thy ministers, these dost Thou send,  
Help of the helpless ones, man to befriend.

Still let them succour us, still let them fight,  
Lord of angelic hosts, battling for right.”

JOSEPH OF THE STUDIUM.

8. *As a religious mystic Paul saw a vision of the consummation of God's kingdom on the earth and in heaven.*—Around that mystic vision his imagination played. In its light he sunned his soul. He was sure of the future. The ultimate issue of the present world-struggle was to him in nowise uncertain. He trusted his deepest instincts when they told him

“that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to all ;  
And every winter change to spring.”

TENNYSON.

He saw that while in the present stage of the cosmic process “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together until now” (Rom. viii. 22),

the travail pains were not to last for ever, or to be endured for nothing ; but from them was to come the birth of a new order. He saw that as parts of one harmonious plan all things were working together, and as parts of one beneficent whole they were "working together for good" (Rom. viii. 28).

Behind all things he saw a process of evolution in which everything has its appointed place. He saw, as Emerson did later on, that

"The world was built in order,  
And the atoms march in tune."

He saw also that all events in human life and history are under divine control, and move on to a destined end.

Before all things he saw a moral goal to which they tend. Dualism prevailed in the present ; a ceaseless conflict was going on between the powers of light and darkness, and of good and evil. Out of this conflict—which is essentially a conflict between the human will and the divine purpose—had come all the tragedies of human life. But, looking far into the future, Paul saw no conflict, he saw no tragedy. He saw the disturbing forces which are now at work lifted up into the divine unity, and brought into harmony with the divine plan ; he saw opposition to the divine will overcome, evil subdued, and goodness victorious ; he saw, in short, the realisa-



tion of that condition of moral monism in which God is "all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 28).

This declaration of Paul touching the consummation of the divine purpose is not "a rhetorical paraphrase for the conception of the all-ness," as Olshausen puts it, but is a definite prophecy and promise that good will be triumphant ; that in the final issue of events the present method of divine administration will be vindicated ; that the lost harmony will be restored ; and that, however wide the line of deviation from Heaven's predestined plan may be, the circuit will yet be completed which runs *from God to God*.

## CHAPTER III.

### A CHRISTIAN MYSTIC.

PAUL, as we have seen, often takes his stand as a mystic upon common theistic ground. He speaks as a religious man ; he feels his oneness with all who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, and who take a religious view of God, of nature, and of the universe. But at other times he enters within the gate of Christian faith, and stands distinctly upon Christian ground. Then he speaks, not as one to whom Christianity is a refined form of theism, but as one whose thought and experience are rooted and grounded in Christ. His theology is positively and uncompromisingly Christocentric. Hence it follows that, while there are many of his mystical utterances which non-Christian readers unhesitatingly accept, there are others which find a responsive echo only in the hearts of Christian believers.

To Paul as a Christian mystic the Reality of Realities whom he sought to know was manifested in Christ. Through Christ the personal

knowledge of God, for which his spirit craved, was mediated. Christ had to him, as Ritschl has put it, "the religious value of God." The doctrine of the divine immanence was to him simply another form of the doctrine of the Real Presence. By baptizing it into the name of Christ, he gave to it a new significance. Interpreted in the light of his teaching, the declaration, "God is in His world," means, Christ is in His world ; for "God in history" we are warranted to read, Christ in history ; for "God in nature" we have the right to substitute, Christ in nature. Henceforth to us

"There are no Gentile oaks or pagan pines,  
The grass beneath our feet is Christian grass."

In Christ is found the key which unlocks the secrets of the universe. As a Christian mystic, Paul held direct communion with the Father *through Christ*. To adopt the phrase of the English mystic Juliana of Norwich, Christ was "the ground of his beseechings." He was his way of approach to the Father, the medium through which all his intercourse with Heaven was carried on. The unseen world with which he kept in touch was the world which the Christ who came from it had brought to light. All the revelations of the heavenly world which he saw had Christ for their central figure. The good and bad angels which peopled the air

were under the control of Christ. To him the good angels paid worship, and upon Him, as the ladder of communication between heaven and earth, they "ascended and descended" on their errands of mercy (John i. 18). The consummation for which he looked was the triumph of the Messianic Kingdom. At the heart of things he saw a form of energy at work making for reparation. The world upon which he looked was a world within which redeeming power had been lodged, and which was therefore on its long and painful way towards the realisation of its redemption. He plainly states that the eternal purpose of God "which He purposed in him, unto a dispensation of the fulness of times," had as its object "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. i. 10). In Christ, the Redeemer of man, the eternal purpose of God was to be consummated.

The mysticism of St. Paul is, in a word, Christian, because it is founded upon a direct and personal relationship with Christ. Like other parts of his Christianity, it grew out of a first-hand experience of Christ. In it experience and theology are inextricably intertwined. It is not so much something thought out as it is something which has entered, as a moral force, into consciousness, through experience.

Among the constituent elements of Christian mysticism as found in Paul, we would note the following :

### A VISION OF CHRIST.

With this his new life as a Christian man began. In every instance in which he refers to the great crisis of his life, when his career of persecution was checked, and the entire current of his life was changed, he makes special mention of a vision of the glorified Christ. The time when the vision came to him was when he was on his way to Damascus, on the extermination of the pestiferous Christian sect intent. He was just entering the shady avenue which sloped down the hill at the foot of which Damascus lies ; the fiery sun was blazing in the mid-day sky, when suddenly a light above the brightness of the sun shone round about him. Falling prostrate to the ground in amazement and terror, he heard a voice, which was something other than " the echo of his surging thought and feeling," saying to him, " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me ? " With that searching, melting question Saul was " apprehended." Christ laid His hand upon him, claiming him as His own, and he yielded himself up at once. When strong natures like his give up, they give up

completely. Their surrender is absolute and irreversible.

The absurdity of the theory that Saul was suffering from the effects of a sunstroke and the evidence that his mind was alive are seen in the question, "Who art thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," was the answer; "it is hard for thee to kick against the goad." Conscience was evidently at work in the breast of Saul. He was beginning to have misgivings. Like a refractory ox, kicking against the goad of his driver, he was kicking against conviction. The martyrdom of Stephen had in all probability made a deep impression upon him. The witnesses who stoned Stephen had cast their outer garments at his feet. In Stephen's triumphant death he saw an illustration of the power of Christian faith. A Spanish painter represents him as walking at the martyr's side with a melancholy calmness, having upon his countenance the shadow of his coming repentance. Augustine unhesitatingly declares, "the Church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen." Stephen's martyrdom was at least one link in the chain of events leading to Saul's conversion. But whatever was working in his mind before this time, it was only now that he really knew Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah and Lord. The moment this truth broke in upon him, trembling



and astonished he exclaimed, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" To the heavenly vision he yielded instant and unqualified obedience. He was now ready for any sacrifice; ready to lift up the standard which had fallen from the hands of Stephen; ready to go anywhere or do anything that his newly found Lord might command. Henceforth his proudest title was "bond-servant of Jesus Christ."

This vision must not be reduced to an inward impression made upon the mind of Paul during a trance. It was a direct revelation of the presence of the risen, living Christ. With Paul the conviction was unshaken that he had actually seen the radiant form of the glorified Redeemer. But whatever the nature of this epiphany, it afforded him indubitable evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was risen from the dead, and was therefore to be accepted as the true Messiah. It was also adduced as affording valid proof to others. After enumerating the instances in which Jesus had appeared to those who were specially prepared to receive Him, he adds, "Last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1 Cor. xv. 8). How glad we are to receive the testimony of such a man regarding the resurrection of Christ! Paul was not the sort of man to be deceived; he was not the sort of man to be swept off his

feet by the great surging waves of emotion which then rolled over his soul. He maintained his intellectual balance. He knew that the vision which had come to him in that "eternal moment on the Damascus road" was real, and not the effect of an overheated or diseased imagination. The question, "Have not I seen the Lord Jesus?" was to him the end of all argument.

In this experience, as Wernle has said, Paul found "the genesis of his gospel and apostleship."<sup>1</sup> He argued that if Christ was not risen he had no gospel to preach, and no apostolic testimony to deliver. When the reality of his conversion and the validity of his apostolic call were questioned by Peter and James, it is said that "Barnabas brought him to the Apostles and related to them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and had spoken with Him" (Acts ix. 2). That was enough. The Christian experience and apostolic call of one who had seen the Lord and spoken with Him, were not for a moment to be doubted.

Paul's experience had a miraculous setting. Connected with it were certain outward conditions which can hardly be expected to be repeated in the present day, when Christianity is its own witness. But what was essential in

<sup>1</sup> *Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 280.

it—the personal revelation of Christ to the soul—is an abiding fact in Christian consciousness. In another form “the heavenly vision” still is given. “Not with our mortal eyes,” but with the inseeing eyes of faith, “do we behold our Lord.” The same inward illumination by which Paul saw a face which his companions did not see, the same spiritual sensitiveness by which he heard a voice which they did not hear, may still be ours. A cloud of witnesses stand ready to testify that Christ has appeared to them in the way, that they have heard His voice, and have received from His hands substantial benefits. “What they have received assures them that He is alive, that He is within reach, and that He is the Saviour and Lord of men. That they have received those blessings in answer to their faith in Christ, is a matter of personal consciousness. They know it, as they know that fire burns.”<sup>1</sup> The validity of this testimony nothing can overturn.

#### AN INWARD REVELATION.

The outward vision of Christ became an inward revelation. The Christ who was revealed to Paul was revealed *in* him. The veil was taken completely away, and in his inner con-

<sup>1</sup> *The Living Christ and the Four Gospels*, R. W. Dale, p. 10.

sciousness he knew Christ not after the flesh, but in the glory of His divine nature. He refers to the effect of this inward revelation in the words, "When it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. i. 16). Paul trusted this inward revelation implicitly, never questioning whither it might lead him. As soon as it came to him he sought to carry out the work to which he had been called by the grace of God, and set apart on the ground of fitness. He took counsel of no man, but went the way the Spirit led, fulfilling with fidelity his destined mission of preaching to a sinful world—to which Christ had made him debtor—the good news of salvation.

By the outward vision he became a Christian, by the inward revelation he was initiated into the apostleship. It was adduced by him as indubitable evidence that he was a divinely-called apostle—that he had received his commission directly from God. He was an apostle "not from man, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised Him from the dead" (Gal. i. 1). No ordaining hands were laid upon him but those of God.

His authority to preach came neither from a human source nor through a human channel. It came direct from heaven through Christ. The proof that he possessed it did not consist in a parchment carried in the hand, but in an experience carried in the heart ; it consisted, in fine, in the engendering of the apostolic spirit and the bestowment of apostolic gifts. In his defence before Agrippa, he represents Jesus as saying to him, when first He crossed his path, "To this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness in those things wherein thou hast seen Me, and in the things wherein I will appear unto thee" (Acts xxvi. 16, 17). As touching the gospel which he was given to preach, he distinctly affirms, "It is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. i. 11, 12). This may mean that his gospel came out of the personal revelation of Christ—that in that revelation he found his message ; or it may mean that Christ revealed it to him directly—not necessarily by formal words, but in all likelihood by inward suggestion and illumination ; and that in that inner revelation, which consisted in an understanding of the spiritual significance of what he had seen, was found his message. Whichever view be adopted, the prac-

tical result is the same. Paul was convinced that he had a message so personal and so unique that he could speak of it as "my gospel." It bore no ecclesiastical hall-mark. It had upon it the stamp of heaven. Hence it was clothed with divine authority.

It has been suggested that Paul may have had the memory of this inward revelation in view when he penned the words, "It is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts to give the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). It was from the face of Christ that there came the inshining light which filled every chamber of his soul with the glory of God.

This interior revelation was not given as the reward of ascetic austerities,—which is the Roman Catholic conception of ecstatic vision,—it was given of God's good pleasure, and it was given for a practical end. Its object was to make the way of duty clear, and to incite to its performance. Vision and prevision always go together. A vision of Christ is always accompanied with a vision of duty. The heavenly vision which is given in Christ is a vision of the heavenly life brought down to earth. No man can get a glimpse of the glory of Christ to whom this life appears as it did before. No man ever saw



Christ who did not hear a voice calling him to a higher life. Christ has some distinctive mission upon which He wishes to send every one to whom He manifests Himself. The revelation He gives is never an end in itself. With every revelation is connected a task. We are never allowed to build our tent upon the heights of transfiguration, but must go down to the unfinished work that awaits us, inspired and strengthened by the mystic vision which we have seen on the holy mount.

#### IN THE ARABIAN DESERT.

After receiving his divine commission, Paul had a brooding time. Before entering into the work to which he had been called, he was led to go apart for a season of preparation. The reference to this experience is somewhat vague, but it is full of suggestiveness. Instead of going up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him, Paul himself says, "I went away into Arabia, and again I returned unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas" (Gal. i. 17, 18).

Touching the place of his retirement, its duration, and object, there has been a great variety of conjectures and opinions. The place was, in

all probability, Arabia of the Wanderings—a place of hallowed memories. The duration—according to the Jewish manner of reckoning, which puts part of a year for the whole—may have been, and probably was, less than two years. Concerning the object, Conybeare and Howson suggest that it could only have been “for the purpose of contemplation and solitary communion with God; to deepen his repentance, and fortify his spirit with prayer.”<sup>1</sup> Meyer thinks that the retirement into Arabia is to be looked upon “not as having for its object a general preparation, but as a first, certainly fervent experiment of extraneous ministry.”<sup>2</sup> Stalker says that “after his conversion he naturally wished to retreat into solitude and think over the meaning and issues of that which had befallen him.”<sup>3</sup> Dr. Edwin Hatch looks at the matter in this way: “A great mental, no less than a great bodily convulsion naturally calls for a period of rest; and the consequences of his new position had to be drawn out and realised before he could properly enter upon the mission work which lay before him.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps all of these considerations must be taken into account fully to understand the significance of this incubation period in the life of Paul. This Arabian experience

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Epistles of Paul*, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of St. Paul*, p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> See note on Gal. i. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Art. “Paul” in *Encyc. Bibl.*

came, like the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, immediately before entering upon his public mission. God allured him, and brought him into the wilderness that He might speak comfortably unto him. He needed rest ; he needed further light ; he needed time to take his bearings, to gather himself together, and to lay out the plan of his life ; and, above all, he needed to get nearer to God, and to be filled more completely with His Spirit. Most of his time in Arabia was doubtless spent in long periods of fasting and prayer, although part of it may have been spent in preaching the gospel at Damascus and other places. During these lonely wilderness vigils, what wonderful experiences he must have had ! What deep communings with nature and God ! what heart-searchings ; what self-emptyings ; what scrutinising of motives ; what clarifying of vision ; what readjustment of values ; what outbreathings of holy desire ; what inbreathings of divine life ; what burning of heart as Christ drew near and opened to him the Scriptures ; what kindling of love to Christ ; what awakening of compassion towards those who are without ; what stirring up of passion for the salvation of a lost world. Out of Arabia he came with a life re-made ; and with a fixed and clear purpose of missionary consecration, from which he never swerved.

Every great soul has his Arabia—his seasons of solitude—seasons of silent communion and meditation in which he dwells in the presence of the Everlasting. By the influence of these mystic seasons the whole future life is shaped. Every man has to withdraw from the babblement of the world, and listen to the voice of his own soul, and to the voice of God, before he is prepared for his high calling. The man is to be pitied who is afraid to go into Arabia ; or who, going into it, finds it a voiceless desert.

“ God is not dumb, that He should speak no more.  
If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness  
And find'st not Sinai ; 'tis thy soul is poor.”

LOWELL.

There are some like Paul, who in their desert wanderings find Calvary. There they pitch their tent. And, coming down from its sacred heights, they are transfigured with a greater glory than that which shone from the face of Moses when he came down from the mount where he had communed with God face to face.

### THE MYSTICAL UNION.

The union of the soul with God is the goal of mysticism. The union of the soul with God *through Christ* is the basic principle of Christian mysticism. A further step is taken by the

Christian mystic when for union with God through Christ he substitutes union with Christ as God. In the experience of Paul the divine union generally took the latter form. His mystical union with Christ as God was the central fact in his experience as a Christian man. The Christ whose vision filled his soul was the Christ with whom he was "inextricably united" (so Dr. Marcus Dods); the Christ in whom his personality was embraced, as the personality of a child is embraced in that of his mother, was the manifested God. Personal union with a divine Redeemer was the secret of his life.

The pulpit of a few years ago made a great deal more of the mystical union between Christ and the believer than the pulpit of to-day is making. To the old divines the mystical union was a great mystery, which they accepted without attempting to explain. What they were sure of was that it was real, and that it was the fundamental thing in their religious experience. It was to them a matter of fact even when it might not be a matter of present feeling. Upon the certainty of it they fell back even when not actively conscious of it. In every storm they anchored in the belief that the union between themselves and Christ was one which nothing could ever sever.

In recent years certain groups of Christian

students and workers, like the Keswick school in England, have made the doctrine of the believer's union with Christ central in their teaching; and while they may not have been always free from exegetical vagaries and from exaggerated representations of truth, they have done not a little to quicken and edify the lives of Christians. To their gatherings many have repaired to find a spiritual uplift which they have failed to find elsewhere. In the region which they explore, and over which they sometimes seem to claim proprietary rights, lie the treasures of truth by which the spiritual life is enriched. Perhaps the main service which they have rendered to the religious thought and life of the times has been the emphasising of the mystical side of the Pauline theology. While preserving the doctrine of justification by faith in its forensic setting, they have found in it an explanation of the method by which the soul is related to God, and made a partaker of that Divine and enduring life from which all the fruits of holiness spring.

The doctrine of the mystical union reaches to the borderland between truth and error, and the step across the unseen boundary-line is easily taken. The error into which many have fallen is that of deducing from the union of man with God the doctrine of "deification."



The man in union with God has been regarded as part of God, a spark of His essential life, a particle of His divine essence. "The unity of our spirit in God," says Ruysbrock, "exists in two ways, essentially and actively"; and Eckhart gives this illustration, "As the fire turns all that it touches into itself, so the birth of the Son of God in the soul turns us into God, so that God no longer knows anything in us but His Son." It is surprising to find such a sober conservative thinker as Dr. Charles Hodge following suit in the remark, "By our union with Christ we partake of His humanity as well as of His divinity; His theanthropic nature is conveyed to us with all its merits, excellences, and glories." Now, whatever the mystical union may mean, it certainly cannot mean that our nature is in every sense identical with Christ's, or that His is substituted for ours. The divine union is not to be explained in a pantheistic sense as annihilating the will, by absorbing one life into another so as to obliterate moral personality and responsibility and put man on "the further side of good and evil." This swallowing up of individual life would make man a mere automaton, moving as he is moved. Clement and Origen in their day lifted up their protest against this doctrine, which, according to their phrasing of it, made

man "consubstantial with God." They saw whereunto such a doctrine would inevitably lead. They saw that whoever accepted it would, like the initiate of the Greek Mysteries who was told, "Thou shalt be a god instead of a mortal," walk with prideful feet, and fall into the pit of humiliation, which the humble alone escape. The best of the mystics have been careful to avoid this danger. When Esaias Steifel advanced the proposition, "I am Christ," he was censured by Jacob Boehme, who said, "The believer is, on the contrary, Christ's instrument—a small, humble, and fruitful sprout."<sup>1</sup>

Fully to define or explain the mystical union is impossible. It can be known only in part. "The fact, the experience transcends our analysis," says Bishop Moule, "but it is not beyond our faith, nor beyond our reception and inward verification."<sup>2</sup> It is as mysterious as life, and is as much in evidence—"the fruits of righteousness" which it produces being patent to all. One thing is clear, it is marked by a moral quality. It is the moral insphering of one life in another; the blending of one life with another, so that, while remaining separate and distinct, they have but one heart-beat, one will, one purpose. When Christians are said to be "partakers of

<sup>1</sup> Dörner, *History of Protestant Theology*, vol. ii. p. 181.

<sup>2</sup> *Studies in Philippians*, p. 33.

the divine nature" (2 Pet. ii. 4), this must not therefore be understood to mean that they partake of the essential nature of the Godhead, but of the divine moral nature. They are not clothed with divine attributes, but are filled with divine impulses, governed by divine principles, and inspired by divine aims.

Recently the question has been discussed with unnecessary sharpness, as to whether the union of the believer with Christ is "a moral union merely," or whether it has in it a "biological" element.<sup>1</sup> "Moral to the core" it undoubtedly is; but to say that does not exhaust its meaning. Entering into the experience of it is a sense of the impact of a life upon a life,—the passing of a life into a life,—a thing which defies analysis, but which is related to moral action as being to doing, or as nature to character. Underlying all ethical observances, and accounting for them, is a spirit, or principle, or vital force, which is as much greater than they as a cause is greater than its effects. This new spirit, or principle, or force, is spoken of as a birth or creation. In all the states of consciousness to which Paul refers as making up Christian experience, it is ascribed to Christ. From union with Him comes a new moral potentiality. His

<sup>1</sup> See discussion by Dr. Denney and Professor Peake in *The Expositor* for Jan. and Feb. 1904.

love is the upflowing sap by which the moral life of the Christian is nourished. He imparts, not new powers, but new *power*. The gospel which makes him known is the dynamic energy of God, working unto salvation in every one who becomes united to Him by faith.

But while we can never comprehend the mystery of the mystical union, we may in some measure *apprehend* it. And because of its doctrinal and ethical importance, we cannot turn aside from its study without suffering loss. As we ponder over it, it behooves us, in view of the limitation of our powers, to look to the source of light, and pray:

“Oh teach me, Lord, to know and own  
This wonderous mystery:  
That Thou with us art truly one,  
And we are one in Thee.”

By the use of the following key-words the doctrine of the mystical union taught by Paul may be still further opened up.

I. INCORPORATION.—So close and intimate is the union of Christ and the believer, that Paul likens it to the union of the body with its members. “Now are ye the body of Christ,” he says, “and severally members thereof” (1 Cor. xii. 27). Carrying out this figure still further, he declares that as a man cherishes his own flesh, so Christ cherishes the Church, “because we are members

of His body " (Eph. v. 30). Christians are members of His body, not, of course, in a literal, but in a spiritual sense. They are members of His *mystical* body. They have their life in Him ; they are nourished and sustained by Him. His love is the life-blood which circulates in their souls. They are incorporated into Him, so that they form, as Augustine says, *una persona*, or, as the German mystics were wont to say, *unus Christus*. The members are many, but the body is one, and the body is Christ. "The members and the head," says Louis de Leon, "are one Christ."

2. UNIFICATION. — The mystical union was not with Paul such an indefinite thing as "unification with the Infinite." It consisted in unification of the spirit of man with the spirit of Christ. He taught that "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). That is, he is one spirit with his Lord. The spirit of Christ, which is the emanation of His consciousness, has entered into him and become his. This new spirit assimilates everything to itself. It takes hold of the disturbing and hurtful things in a human life and brings them into harmony with the rule of Christ. In the struggle between the under and the upper sides of man's nature, it gives victory to the latter. The body is kept under, and the spirit is on the top. There is

more than "an ethical harmony of two mutually inclusive wills"; the two wills blend into one; and that point is reached, described by Rabbi Gamaliel, when he exclaims, "O Lord, grant that I may do Thy will as if it were my will; that Thou mightest do my will as if it were Thy will."

Between Christ and the soul of man there exists a ground of affinity, or this unification would not be possible. The soul was made for Christ, and finds its true life in union with Him. The interfusion of moral personalities, which takes place when Christ and man are mystically united, implies an original oneness of nature. Hearts like metals fuse together when they have qualities in common. A scion can be grafted upon a stock only when it is in alliance-condition with it. That man is capable of coming into union with Christ is his glory. It is also the ground of his responsibility touching his salvation. He cannot save himself, but he can receive the spirit of Christ into his heart that he may be saved. And so essential is this act of reception, that Paul declares, "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). The spirit of Christ in the spirit of man is the potent means of the unification of the spirit of man with the spirit of Christ; and the unification of the spirit of man with the spirit of Christ is that which makes man His.



3. IDENTIFICATION.—That is, the identification of one life with another, so that there is oneness of thought, of desire, and of deed. When one life is in another they become in a sense identical. This is indicated in Paul's words, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). What a mystical utterance! It means that Christ was his life (see Col. iii. 4), the spring of thought and feeling, the source of his outward activities. Apart from Christ he had no motive or aim in life.

This intersphering of one life with another is characterised by Dr. George B. Stevens as "mystical realism"—being mystical in the sense that it is inscrutable, and real in the sense that it represents a real and actual spiritual relation to Him.<sup>1</sup> The form in which it is most frequently set forth by Paul is that of being "in Christ." Of this expression Dr. Farrar remarks that "it contains the quintessence of Paul's theology." With this Dr. Pfleiderer agrees, and holds that "the mystical element in Paulinism depends immediately and exclusively upon Paul's notion of faith," and that in the formula "in Christ" is found the centre from which his mystic faith springs. That pregnant "formula" he explains as implying that "the believer gives up himself, his own life, to Christ, and possesses the life of Christ in himself; he is in Christ, and Christ is

<sup>1</sup> *The Pauline Theology*, pp. 32, 256.

in him ; he died with Christ, and Christ becomes his life.”<sup>1</sup> Being “ in Christ ” he is so identified with Him as to be one with Him spiritually and ethically.

But what is it to be “ in Christ ” ? It is to be in the sphere of His influence ; it is to be inside the circle in which His power savingly operates. Into this inner sphere man comes voluntarily. He unites himself with Christ, and He abides in him, by the exercise of voluntary adhesion. He keeps himself in Christ’s love as the soil in which his life is rooted. This he does by faith—which is the act of personal identification with Christ.

4. TRANSFORMATION.—The mystical union is connected with a new ethical experience. “ If any man is in Christ he is a new creation ” (2 Cor. v. 17) ; life is remade ; chaos gives place to cosmos ; the character that was without form and void is transformed and transfigured into the likeness of the divine ideal.

The divine union implies on Christ’s side the forthputting of moral, suasive influences, which reach the centre of personality, and lead to the production of new choices, and to the progressive transformation of man into the divine image. It implies on the human side a continual effort to attain conformity to the likeness of

<sup>1</sup> *Paulinism*, vol. i. p. 199.

Christ. The working of a new creative spirit within leads to that "free imitation of God" which was regarded by Plato as the highest aspiration of man; and which Paul enjoins in the words, "Be ye imitators of God as beloved children" (Eph. v. 1). We imitate God by copying "the express image of His person" given in the life and character of the Christ of history. Modifying the words of the dying Plotinus, "I am striving to bring the god which is within me into harmony with the God which is in the universe," every Christian should say, "I am striving to bring the divine ideal within me into harmony with the Ideal Life which shines out in the pages of gospel story."

5. FELLOWSHIP.—From union comes *communion*, companionship, friendly intercourse. The German mystics, at whose fire Luther kindled his torch, called themselves "Friends of God," in accord with the saying of Christ, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends." To this title all Christians can lay claim. They have been called by a faithful God into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ (1 Cor. v. 9). Standing to Him in personal relationship, they enjoy the closest and tenderest intimacies. They go to Him with all their troubles and with all their joys; for they know that whatever concerns them concerns Him. These transactions

with Him are the profoundest experiences in their lives. Their fellowship with Him has another side. It is of the nature of a practical partnership. It involves community of interests and aims. They seek the things that He seeks. They are "fellow-workers" with Him; labouring together in the same cause; pulling together in the same yoke; toiling side by side in building up the walls of the same temple. In the future of the kingdom they are mutually bound up. As joint-partners they share in its common gains and losses; as joint-heirs they share in its certain triumphs and glories.

#### A MYSTICAL BROTHERHOOD.

Paul represents the union of all believers in Christ as resulting in their union with one another. Those who are united to Christ in a mystical body are united to one another in a mystical brotherhood. They are bound together not by ritual, nor by creed, nor by the iron hoop of external authority, but by the possession of a common life-principle. They are one in Christ. We see in their union, as Dr. Hort remarks, "the action, so to speak, of the Head on the whole body of the Ecclesia; the fitting together and knitting together of the whole,

the spreading of life as from a centre, through every joint by which it is supplied.”<sup>1</sup> Clement compares this fraternal union to a chain of rings held together by a magnet. His figure was one in which Christian Platonists delighted.<sup>2</sup> Paul’s figure, which is that of a living organism, draws deeper. It makes the union a vital thing, and not a thing of outward organization. In his day the Church was just beginning to be organized into a corporate body. Wherever it was planted it took outward shape according to local conditions. Through the organization it became visible; but the real Church, the living organism, was invisible. It was the creative force by which the shell of outward organization was built up.

There is thus a Church within a Church,—an invisible mystical Church, which runs through denominational lines, overleaps all sectarian barriers, and embraces all who are one in spirit, all who have been fused into one in the furnace heat of a Christ-enkindled love. There is between the members of this inner mystic circle of initiates a secret bond of union; a touch of nature which makes them kin; a spiritual freemasonry by which they recognise one another when they meet. They illustrate the principle

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Ecclesia*, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> See *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, by Charles Bigg, p. 100.

that while outward things often disunite, spiritual things unite. To this inner fellowship, to which has been given the name of the Holy Assembly, belonged "the Brethren of the Common Life," an order which arose in the Netherlands, and of which Thomas à Kempis, the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, was a member. In those days of the Church's decadence such orders were compelled to go outside the pale for fellowship. In Paul's day it was not so. The Church was then a large family. Heathen onlookers were profoundly impressed by its close communion, and tried in vain to discover the bond by which its members were united. They fancied that they must be some occult order bound together by oaths and bloody rites for mutual protection, and for the propagation of their tenets. Little did they dream that they were the representatives of the highest and holiest order this earth has ever seen,—an order of elect souls, founded upon union in spirit, in love, and in a common service to the world by which they were reviled.

As an idealist Paul saw the value of this mystic brotherhood. He saw what it was yet to be. He saw in it the nucleus of the larger brotherhood of a redeemed humanity; he saw in it the agency by which Christ's redemptive mission was to be accomplished. The com-



munistic experiment of putting all worldly possessions into a common fund from which everyone should draw according to need, had been tried, and failed. In such cold wintry skies the consummate flower of Christian communism could not live. The world was not prepared for an ideal so lofty. But the divine impulse which created it could not die ; and there are those who still dream that the heaven-born spirit of brotherhood, which then effloresced for one glorious moment, shall, in the fulness of the times, come to maturity in a larger and enduring form. Meanwhile this mystic brotherhood "increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. ii. 12), drawing into itself something of earth's best ; losing its life that it may find it ; silently filling the world with its expanding influence, and growing into "the fulness of him who filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 23).

### MYSTICAL SONSHIP.

Those who are mystically united to Christ are brothers in relation to one another, and sons in relation to God. They are members of a mystical family, which Paul calls "the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10), and also "the household of God" (Eph. ii. 19), — a household

which is the archetype "from which every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15).

In his view of sonship Paul differs from John. According to John, sonship begins with birth; according to Paul, it begins with adoption. But Paul does not look upon adoption as a purely legal act implying merely the attainment of a new standing; it is also a spiritual act implying the possession of a new spirit. He says to the Roman Christians, "Ye received not a spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). And to the Galatians he says, "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father, So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Gal. iv. 6, 7). His contention is that those who are placed in God's family have the spirit of sons,—the spirit of filial love and obedience; and that when they cry "Abba, Father," it is the Spirit of God who is speaking through them.

The only instance in Paul's writings where there is a suggestion of sonship through birth, is in the highly mystical utterance, "My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19). Here it is through his own mother-love and through his

own travail pains that the divine life already begotten in the heart comes to maturity. He travails for the children of his soul, "begotten by him in the gospel," suffering for them a mother's pangs until the Christ born within them be fully formed, and His image, which is their inward ideal, be clear and distinct. This idea of the birth and growth of Christ in the soul has always been a favourite one with the Christian mystics. The English Platonists affirmed that an infant Christ is born in every believer. Eckhart was wont to say, "God begets His Son in me," as if he meant that there was a continual begetting in him of the life of Christ. What he ought to have said was, "God has begotten His Son in me; and the embryonic life is gradually coming into full development."

The birth of Christ in the soul is, of course, not a literal thing. It is the birth of the Christ-spirit, the spirit of love. As Christ by birth took upon Him the likeness of man, so by being re-born we take upon ourselves the likeness of God. Sonship implies community of nature between the son and the father. The son derives his nature from his father, and consequently he has the same nature as his father. Human parentage does not extend further than the body. God is "the Father of our spirits." Our inner natures were created in His image. "We are

His offspring" ; and we therefore speak in no figurative sense when we pray, " Our Father." But there is a still higher place in the scale of sonship to which we may rise. We can become God's spiritual children. We can become God-like in character. As we have borne the image of our earthly father, and have thus proclaimed our earthly lineage, so we can bear the image of the heavenly Father, and thus proclaim our heavenly lineage.

This new relation of sonship, into which we are brought when Christ is born in us and we are adopted into the family of God, is a matter of conscious experience. The agency by which the consciousness of this higher relationship is awakened is the Holy Spirit. It is His function to establish in the heart the fact of our heavenly sonship. " The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God " (Rom. viii. 16). His secret witness, which, according to Calvin, is necessary to the confirmation of faith, is direct and immediate. It is the witness of spirit with spirit. It consists not in a subjective inference, nor in a whisper or dream, nor in any shock of emotion, but in the upspringing of a new spirit—the spirit of filial love and obedience. The fact to which the Spirit bears inward witness through this experience belongs to the region of mysticism, but we

can no more doubt its reality than we can doubt our own existence.

### THE HOLY SPIRIT.

What can be more mystical than the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as taught by Paul? The Holy Spirit is literally the holy breath—the out-breathed and inbreathed life of the Almighty. “He is a divine fire kindled in the soul,—a fire which man can keep alive or quench” (1 Thess. v. 19). He is at once a diffused spiritual activity, viewless as the wind, and a living person consciously present in the heart. In the words of Brownell, which Professor James quotes with approval, “The influence of the Holy Spirit, exquisitely called the Comforter, is a matter of actual experience, as solid as that of animal magnetism.” His influence is both mediate and immediate. He works not only through the word, but also directly upon the heart through the law of suggestion, and through the impact and pressure of His personal presence. The latter mode of influence is assumed in all the New Testament figures, which represent Him as “shed forth,” “poured out,” or as the element in which the soul is immersed.

In the teaching of Paul touching the mystical presence and operation of the Holy Spirit, the believer is represented in the following ways:

(1) *As possessed by the Spirit.*—The idea of spirit-possession was a very common one in the days of Paul, but it usually took the form of the possession of evil spirits. In the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Paul lifted the idea of spirit-possession to a high place. He set the possession by the Holy Spirit over against possession by evil spirits. He made the salvation of man consist of the dispossession from his heart of the spirit of evil as an intruder and usurper; and the possession of his heart by the Holy Spirit as its rightful owner. By the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart, the principle of evil, whose name is Legion, is exorcised, and man is taken possession of for God.<sup>1</sup>

To gain possession of man is the end for which He is continually working. He patiently waits until the heart-door is voluntarily opened, and then He enters, bringing blessings rich and satisfying.

(2) *Indwelt by the Spirit.*—The Holy Spirit takes up His permanent abode within the heart in which He gets a foothold. He keeps house there as Master, holding the key to every chamber, and filling the remotest corner with the glory of His presence. “Know ye not,” exclaims Paul, “that ye are a sanctuary of God, and that

<sup>1</sup> For a thoughtful unfolding of this idea see chap. vii. of *The Crown of Science*, by A. Morris Stewart, D.D.



the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? the sanctuary of God is holy, and such ye are " (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17). Mixing his metaphors, he represents believers in their united capacity as "growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord," in whom they also "are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 22). This figure of a mystical temple composed of believing hearts in which the Holy Spirit dwells, is fraught with the deepest spiritual significance. The sanctuary of the Spirit must not only be kept clean, it must also be set apart for God's use. Upon this thought is founded the admonition of Ignatius, "Let us therefore do all things as becomes those who have God dwelling in them."<sup>1</sup>

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not, however, to be looked upon as a substitute for the indwelling of Christ. The Spirit is the unseen agent by whom the presence of Christ is made real and effective within the soul. There is a sense in which the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was the descent of Christ. It was "the sequel and consummation of His incarnation." To be indwelt by the Holy Spirit is to be indwelt by Christ. It is in this way that we are to understand the mystical words of Paul, "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). This mystery, which was hid from

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. ad Eph.* 15.

all ages and generations and is now made manifest to the saints, is in substance that God has always been speaking in men's hearts and helping them in their upward struggles. The veil is now lifted, and He is seeking to bring them into the clear consciousness of His indwelling presence as the present and continuous source of their spiritual life ; He is seeking by His Spirit to show them that it is Christ who dwells in their inmost being, the hope of glory ; He is seeking to make the work of the Spirit effective, by bringing the Christ, whom He reveals, into the centre of consciousness, that He may hold direct intercourse with our spirits, informing them with His life, constraining them by His love, awakening within them the hope of glory by bringing them into conformity with the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

(3) *Taught by the Spirit*.—The Holy Spirit is the source of spiritual illumination. "There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding" (Job xxxii. 8). Man is open to God ; he is the subject of divine communications. The Holy Spirit has every soul under His instruction. His anointing opens blind eyes. As men are able to receive it, He gives unto them "the word of wisdom" and "the word of knowledge" (1 Cor. xviii. 8).

When Jesus was about to leave His disciples, He gave them over to the tuition of the Holy Spirit, who was to be to them an inward source of progressive illumination, guiding them into all the truth. The Roman Catholic Church has accepted this doctrine of development, but it has not developed; Protestants have held by a stationary revelation, but they have made progress. And why? Because Roman Catholics have fallen below their creed, while Protestants have risen above their creed. The Holy Spirit is the living teacher of the Church. His course of instruction is never ended. Standing in the midst of ever changing conditions, the Church is to find out the lines along which He is leading her thought. She is, like Paul, to bend a listening ear, and hear what He is now saying unto the Churches.

(4) *Led by the Spirit*.—This Paul regarded as an evidence of divine sonship. He emphatically declares that "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14). This leading hand many have felt who have not known their leader's name. The "divine sign" of Socrates, whether an attending dæmon or a warning voice, had in it at least the suggestion of a wisdom not his own, directing and shaping the events of his life. The directing power which Socrates called his "divine sign,"

and which men generally call Providence, Paul called the Holy Spirit. He felt that he was at all times and in all things led of the Spirit's soft and tender touch. To the Spirit's leadership he surrendered his life with an abandon born of unwavering faith.

At the first missionary conference, when the disciples prayed for guidance, "the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereto I have called them" (Acts xiii. 2); and it is added that they, "being sent forth by the Holy Spirit," set out at once on their missionary journey. Some time after, it is recorded that "they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not" (Acts xvi. 6, 7). Upon the heels of this double prohibition Paul had a vision, in which a man of Macedonia appeared to him, beseeching him, and saying, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." "And when he had seen the vision," says Luke, "straightway we sought to go forth to Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them" (Acts xvi. 10).

From these illustrative incidents we see how the Holy Spirit sometimes held Paul back and

at other times urged him on. He did his best to get to certain places, but an arrest was put upon his purpose, and he was led aside from a path he had marked out into one he had never thought of. When turned from his purpose, he did not bemoan his fate, or beat his wings against the iron bars of the Spirit's restrictive edict. He accepted his disappointment graciously, submitting to the divine will, and turning his face and feet towards Macedonia as eagerly as he had turned them towards Bithynia. To their faith in the Spirit's guidance, mystics of all shades have testified. St. Martin says, "A secret thread holds God and the seeker's soul together, even when the way is loneliest and most perilous. He compares himself to a man fallen into the sea, but with a rope bound round his wrist, connecting him with the vessel."<sup>1</sup>

How this direction is given we cannot tell. In all probability by inward suggestion or impression. One thing is sure, the Holy Spirit never violently restrains or compels. He gently guides the will so that a reversal of choice is made; and what is done under his influence is done freely. The surrender made is not that blind "abandonment" which Madame Guyon urged. Reason is not suppressed. Our candle is not blown out so that in the dark we may

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Editorial in the *British Weekly*, 29th June 1905.

cling to an unseen hand. Inward illumination is received that we may see where to go. We are none the less divinely guided because our path is freely chosen.

(5) *Controlled by the Spirit*.—The Holy Spirit speaks with authority. Through Him Christ issues His commands within the soul. (See Acts i. 2.) He speaks in the imperative mood, as one who expects to be obeyed. At a certain juncture in his life Oliver Cromwell said, "I begged that God would not lay this duty upon me." But God would not let him off; and the still small voice which spoke so commandingly, he hastened to obey.

Like Cromwell, Paul was controlled from within. He was sensitive to divine impression. He kept his soul open to the Spirit's influence. He accepted His slightest suggestion. His will was plastic, his heart responsive. He allowed the Spirit to have His own way with him in all things. Not that this control made his acts divine, as many mystics have unwisely imagined. The control being suasive, the distinction between good and evil choice was not rubbed out. To the Spirit's pressure he yielded consciously and freely. The things which the Spirit commanded were the things which he chose. Hence they were never grievous. Duty was a delight. Suffering and sacrifice were



joyfully borne. He knew no deeper blessedness than that which came from conformity to the will of the divine Spirit, whose law was written within the heart.

(6) *Helped by the Spirit*.—Paul was a strong man, but he was not able to stand alone. He needed continual reinforcement of strength. In his defence before Agrippa he lays bare the secret of his life, when he says, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this hour" (Acts xxvi. 22). The help which he obtained was opportune, constant, and efficient. It enabled him to overcome difficulty and opposition, and fulfil the whole round of his duty. It was ministered not at special times only, when great emergencies were to be met, but also in the ordinary course of daily life.

The enduement of power from on high, which was Christ's special promise to His people, is always assumed by Paul to be a present possession, even when he does not distinctly speak of it. But he often does speak of it. He emphatically declares that God gave him "the Spirit of power" (2 Tim. i. 7); and that he lived "through the power of God" (2 Cor. xiii. 4). He exhorts others to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. vi. 10). He even glories in his own infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him

(2 Cor. xii. 9). Evidently his life was grounded in dependence upon a higher power. The love of God which had been "shed abroad" in his heart through the Holy Spirit given to him (Rom. v. 5), suffused his nature with a new energy, which made him strong to serve and to suffer in the Master's cause. This mystical pervasive power, which is said to emanate from the Spirit, and to be realised in a Christ-born love, is the source of human help in every upward struggle; it is the vital sap which produces life's richest ethical fruits; it is the fountain from which come those chrismatic gifts by which the Church fulfils her ministry to the world. It is something that always can be counted upon; something which can never fail. Those who are helped of the Spirit are "marvellously helped," because they are divinely helped. They are lifted above all fear of failure; for behind them is a reservoir of power which can never be diminished, however much it may be drawn upon.

#### AN EXALTED CHRISTOLOGY.

After the vision of Christ's transcendent glory came to Paul, his attitude towards Him was changed. This change is expressed in the words,

“ Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more ” (2 Cor. vi. 16). He did not know Him any longer as the despised Nazarene who had been put to death, but as the mighty Son of God who had risen from the dead ; he did not know Him as a worldly prince who was to meet the carnal Messianic expectations of His fellow-countrymen, but as a spiritual Messiah who was to “ save His people from their sins ” ; he did not know Him as a king whose kingdom was to be established by outward power, but as a king whose kingdom was to be established by the operation of spiritual forces. Consider some of the things which he attributes to Christ as he had come to know Him.

(1) *He is the Crown of Creation.*—Of all the beings that ever came into this world, there is none that is higher than He. He is “ the first-born of all creation ” (Col. i. 15). “ In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ” (Col. ii. 9). He is the head and crown of creation. As creation culminates in man, man reaches his culmination in Christ. Beyond Him there is nothing.

Paul ascribes the pre-eminence of Christ not to His colossal personality, which towers above all others and gives Him historic supremacy, but to the accomplishment of His mediatorial

work. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name that is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 8-11). It is by His sacrificial death that He is exalted to the throne of kingly power; so that the name which He bore in His humiliation becomes the highest and most glorious of all earthly names. It is in this name, which stands as the symbol of suffering love, that all men unitedly bow.

(2) *The Medium of creative power.*—When Paul wrote his Epistle to the Colossians, the seeds of Gnostic philosophy were already sown within the Church. There were those who looked upon matter as essentially evil, and therefore concluded that it could not have been created by God. Between God and the world there was supposed to be a descending series of intermediary powers through whom the work of creation was carried on. Paul brushes this heresy aside, and declares that the creator of all things is Christ, "In Him were all things created, whether thrones, or dominions, or prin-

cipalities, or powers: all things have been created through Him and unto Him" (Col. i. 16). Creation was "in Him," therefore it had a redemptive origin; it was "through Him," therefore it had a redemptive medium; it was "unto Him," therefore it has a redemptive end. In Christ the secret of creation is disclosed.

(3) *The post-existent Saviour of men.*—In the development of the Christology of Paul the post-existence of Christ came before His pre-existence. The Christ whom he first knew was the risen Lord who appeared to him on the way. The fact that He had appeared to him was conclusive evidence that He had survived death. He believed that He was alive, and that His life was inseparably linked with his.

This experience of the living Christ has been continuous throughout the Christian centuries. Many in every age have been ready to testify to the consciousness of it. They claim that Christ has made Himself known to them as truly as He did to Paul, and that they have had original experience of His grace and power. Take two examples. Samuel Rutherford, a Scotch mystic, who lived in stormy days, when persecution dragged men into fame and pushed them up to heaven, torn away from his quiet parish at Anworth, and debarred from preaching, wrote at the very time he was facing a martyr's death,

“ I never knew before that His love was in such a measure.” “ I creep under my Lord’s wing in the great shower, and the waters cannot reach me.” “ It was good for me to come to Aberdeen to learn a new mystery of Christ, that His presence is to be believed against all appearances.” It is such testimonies as these that give to the “ Letters ” of Rutherford perennial interest, and make them as ointment poured forth. Let the other example be that of the Quaker, Isaac Pennington, who thus testifies : “ I have met with my Saviour—I have felt the healings drop into my soul from under His wings.”

With this mystical experience of Christ, Paul’s letters pulsate. In his thought Christ was not a historical person who was fast becoming a fading image and a blessed memory, but a living presence unseen to the eye of sense, but revealed to the eye of faith. “ He saw *Him* spiritually,” says President Edwards, “ whom the world saw not.”

(4) *The pre-existent Son of God.*—The movement of Paul’s thought was from the post-existent to the pre-existent Christ. It was natural that his mind should run backward, and that he should ask, Whence came He ? Does He belong to this earth ; or did He come from the upper sphere ? Was His birth into this world the beginning of His existence, or did He



exist before He was born? Paul was helped to his answer to these questions not only by his experience of Christ, but also by the current Jewish faith in a pre-existent Messiah. Paul transferred that idea to Jesus the Christ, and said of Him, "He is before all things" (Col. i. 17),—before all things in respect to time as well as to precedence. This is equivalent to the saying of John, "In the beginning was the Word." With Paul the pre-existence of Christ was not ideal, it was as real and concrete as His post-existence.

In a highly mystical text he carries back the mediatorship of Christ to a pre-existent state, by asserting of the Jewish fathers that they "did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 3, 4). The manna or "bread from heaven" of which they ate had a spiritual quality. It was "spiritual meat. The water of which they drank was "spiritual water." The smitten rock which accompanied them was "a spiritual rock." To say that these things prefigured Christ does not sound the depth of the apostle's thought. He says expressly that "the rock *was* Christ." As the source of the supplies of grace to the Jewish fathers in their desert wander-

ings, it was a manifestation of His presence in His pre-existent nature. The essential unity of religious experience is thus based upon the essential and universal relation of Christ to men.

In Phil. ii. 7, which has been regarded as the great classic on the subject, the pre-existence of Christ is clearly assumed. Paul there exhorts Christians to imitate the humility of Christ, "who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man." The statement that Christ was originally in the form of God evidently means that in a former state the glory of His divine nature was openly manifested. This being the case, He did not think that equality with God was a thing to be violently grasped. It belonged to Him by right. In becoming man He emptied Himself, not of His divine nature, but of His divine glory. He submitted to the limitations of human life, coming into it in a lowly way, "taking upon Him the form of a servant." He suffered His divine glory to be obscured. "There was an emptying as to use and manifestation, but not as to possession" (so Prof. Bruce). All the honour and privilege which He might have grasped were relinquished as the result of His

being "made in the likeness of man." As He thought it not above Him to be equal with God, He thought it not beneath Him to be equal with men. But the divine glory which was hidden, as the sun is hidden behind a bank of clouds, kept bursting through. Men felt that He was more than He seemed to be. There was a hiding of power which suggested the background of omnipotence. He was at once "God manifest in flesh" (1 Tim. iii. 16), and God concealed in flesh. He was a denizen of earth, and yet a visitant from heaven.

(5) *He is the sole Mediator between God and man.*—Through Him God is *known*. Because the Gnostic found in the Spirit dwelling in man the source and norm of all knowledge of God, he accepted the revelation of God in Christ only so far as he fancied that it agreed with the revelation in himself. Forsaking the sun for his own farthing tallow dip, the light that was in him became darkness. It is in Christ, "the image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15), that God is seen. In Him the attributes of the Godhead are embodied. He is the Logos speaking out of the silence, and making known to men the mind and heart of God. In Him alone can God be fully known. "How vain, therefore, to seek to know God along other lines! How needless to approach Him by any sloping stairs of dark-

ness! He is nigh, and may be known directly in Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

He can also be *approached* directly through Christ. The worship of angels which Paul condemns (Col. ii. 18) “was founded upon the false humility that man was too vile to approach God directly.”<sup>2</sup> There was a measure of truth in this position. Sinful man cannot of himself approach God directly. Mediatorship is a moral necessity. But mediatorship is not a half-way house at which man is to stop, it is the means of reaching a further goal. Paul’s doctrine is that “there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. ii. 5), through whom commerce with heaven can be carried on by sinful men. Speaking of the oneness of privilege enjoyed in the gospel by Jew and Gentile, he says, “Through Him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. ii. 18). And again, “In whom we have access and confidence through our faith in Him” (Eph. iii. 12). In Christ the relationship between God and man, which sin had destroyed, is restored. By Him man ascends to God, and God descends to man. Distance is obliterated. The two are brought together. They live within speaking distance, and they live.

<sup>1</sup> *The Pauline Epistles*, R. D. Shaw, D.D., p. 289.

<sup>2</sup> *The Epistle to the Colossians*, G. W. Garrod, B.A., p. 10.

upon speaking terms. They are united in eternal fellowship.

(6) *He is the bond of union in the universe.*—“In Him all things consist” (Col. i. 18); or, as the marginal reading of the Revised Version has it, “In Him all things hold together.” He is the cementing power which binds into one all parts of the universe. There are intimations in Paul’s writings that the influence of Christ’s mediation reaches beyond the limits of earth, and that in some mysterious way, unknown to us, other worlds are affected by it. He speaks of God as “having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him, unto a dispensation of the fulness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth” (Eph. i. 9, 10). He speaks of the reconciliation which Christ has accomplished through the blood of His cross as affecting “things on earth and things in the heavens” (Col. i. 21). Not only are God and man brought together, heaven and earth are also brought together. The schism of sin is healed, and a connecting link between spirits is established. All parts of God’s universe are brought into their original harmony as parts of one stupendous whole. A ladder of communication between earth and heaven is set up. Of

that ladder Christ's human nature is the foot which rests on earth, and His divine nature the top which reaches to heaven. In Him heaven and earth are brought into closer relationship. In Him all things in the universe are made one, one with each other and one with God.

(7) *He is the conqueror of death.*—The strong statement of Paul is that He has “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light” (1 Tim. i. 10). Death is not literally destroyed. Men die since Christ came just as they did before; but the power of death has been destroyed: its sting has been taken away. A new conception of it has been given; it is no longer the king of terrors. One of the figures under which Paul represents it is that of a child falling asleep on its mother's breast (1 Cor. xv. 18). The doctrine of immortality was “imprinted on the mind in the very original,” and was taught by seers and sages throughout all the ages. At best it had been vaguely apprehended, and so dim did it become at times that it was in danger of vanishing altogether. Paul, as Christ's interpreter, brought it to light in his gospel, so as to make it stand out before the minds of men in all its sublimity and glory.

In Himself Christ exemplified His doctrine of immortality by rising from the dead and becoming “the first-fruits of them that slept”



(1 Cor. xv. 20). His resurrection is at once the pledge and type of ours. Because He rose we shall rise ; and in the way in which He rose we shall rise. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49). By the operation of the creative spirit of life which Christ imparts, we shall be transformed and transfigured into the heavenly image which He bore when His disciples saw Him after His resurrection.

Paul's mysticism nowhere has fuller swing than in his treatment of the doctrine of the resurrection. Resurrection was to him more than resuscitation ; it was, as the word which he employs suggests, an upstanding. Those who rise from the dead pass through to the other side and stand up clothed in a spiritual body fitted for the new sphere of activity upon which they enter. The nature of this spiritual body is not revealed. To call it an astral body does not convey a clearer idea. Two things are plain—it is a body (1 Cor. xv. 44), and it is "like unto the body of Christ's glory"—the glorified body in which He appeared unto Paul on the Damascus road. It differs from the physical body in this, that it is not subject to the law of decay (1 Cor. xv. 54). It grows out of the physical body as a flower grows out of a seed ; and, being a thing of the Spirit's own making, it is the perfect organ

of its expression and action. If it is true now, as the poet Spenser puts it, that

“Of the soule the bodie forme doth take,  
For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make,”

the same is true of the resurrection body. To this Paul adds a moral quality, thus implying that the manner of spirit any man is of will determine the appearance of his resurrection body. This is obviously the meaning of his words, “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. viii. 11).

When men die they are not naked souls, but stand up clothed in a body for which they are responsible. Referring to the transition from the present life to the future life, Paul says, “We know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle (or bodily frame) be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven; so that being clothed upon we shall not be found naked. For, indeed, we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not that we should be unclothed, but that we should be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor.

v. 1-4). What an enhancement of value to the present life does this view of the future bring ! Life is not a fragmentary thing, but a thing of unbroken continuity and of endless progress. The future emerges out of the present like spring out of winter. Mother earth takes the body back into her kindly bosom ; but the spirit, breaking its encasement, soars upwards, and finds itself mated to a new body, and surrounded by new conditions, which help in the promotion of its fullest development.

(8) *He is the Lord of the future.*—Paul rested all his hope of the future upon the Christ who had passed out of sight. He believed that He had risen from the dead, that He was still alive, that He had ascended to His native heaven, from which He would speedily return to dwell with His people and establish His kingdom on the earth. In unfolding his doctrine of the Parousia, in which this great hope blazes forth, he writes as a mystic. The second coming of Christ was to be “a revelation,” or unveiling of the Christ who is hidden (2 Thess. i. 7) ; it was to be an “epiphany”—a bursting forth of His glory, which is now concealed (1 Tim. vi. 14 ; Tit. ii. 13). It was not to be the coming of an absent Lord, but the revelation to the world of His presence—the manifestation of His kingly power and glory.

In dealing with the Parousia and the connected subjects of the resurrection, the judgment, and the consummation of all things, Paul writes as a mystic in rabbinical fetters. He borrows his figures from the apocalyptic literature of his time; yet it is overstating the case to say that he shared the current "uncouth" beliefs of his time regarding the wind-up of the world; "wearing them not as Saul's armour, but with the lightness and ease of those who have been made free by greater truths," and that, "later, the outworn ideas drop from the Gospel as the encasing sheath drops from the opening bud."<sup>1</sup> The figures in which he expressed the truth have no doubt lost much of their force, but the truth contained in them survives. The "ideas" are not necessarily dropped out because their form has changed. With more careful discrimination, H. A. A. Kennedy remarks that "it is important to note that the circle of events which St. Paul groups around the Parousia are no mechanical reproduction of current Judaistic ideas, but take all their colour from his own experience of the risen Jesus."<sup>2</sup> This experience, which formed the spiritual crisis in his own life, formed "the energizing and

<sup>1</sup> *The Story of St. Paul, a Comparison of Acts and Epistles*, by B. W. Bacon, D.D., pp. 246, 247.

<sup>2</sup> *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, p. 174.

organizing centre" of his theology; so that, as Holtzmann has said, "his entire system of doctrine was the exposition of the content of his conversion, the systematising of the Christophany."

Strictly speaking, the Parousia was not the approach, the arrival or coming, but the *presence* of Christ. The word can have no other meaning than that of being present. It is surprising to find such a careful scholar as H. A. A. Kennedy contending that "in the New Testament Parousia usually seems to have the idea of 'arrival' in it, although there are one or two undoubted examples of the simple meaning 'presence.'"<sup>1</sup> The surprise is heightened when he adds, "the difference of signification is of comparatively little importance, as either would suit the conception."<sup>1</sup> It is safe to say that a more important distinction can hardly be imagined. For surely it is a matter of the utmost importance whether Paul, in common with the Christians of his day, looked for Christ to arrive in a dramatic, miraculous, and physical way, or whether he looked for Him to descend from heaven in the power of His spiritual presence to remain continually at his side, to dwell within His Church, and to lead the hosts of righteousness to victory? With the importance of this distinction in view,

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, p. 186.

Jowett says, "The habitual thought of the first Christians was not so much a 'coming' as a 'presence,' as the word implies." What they looked for was the presence of the Lord. Without Him they were powerless. His presence would be a guarantee of the ultimate success of the cause in which they had embarked. It was to be signalised by an inbreaking of spiritual power, from which would issue a great spiritual movement that would go on through the centuries with ever-increasing momentum, until the purposes of redeeming grace should be accomplished. The Parousia was the day of Christ's power—the beginning of His world-wide conquest. It was not exhausted in Paul's time, but is a present and a progressively developing fact. The signs which accompanied its inauguration were external, but the Parousia itself was spiritual. The destruction of the Holy City and the passing away of the ancient Jewish system were the outward signs that what was vital in the Messianic hope was fulfilled in a new way, and that the age of the spirit had come.

In the new dispensation to which Paul looked longingly forward, the distinctive thing was to be the presence of Christ. If the hope he awakened is now being fulfilled, the Church of to-day, instead of looking for the return of her absent Lord, ought to live rejoicingly in the conscious-



ness of His presence, and look hopefully for a constantly increasing manifestation of His sovereign power.

The Parousia was something which Paul expected to happen in his own day. In this hope he never wavered. It is no sufficient explanation of his hope to say that it was a "prophetic forecast," founded upon the principle that a speedy development of events is characteristic of all extreme eschatological expectation (so Kennedy), or that his prophetic vision, which saw the end in the beginning, compressed great movements within a brief space (so Dr. A. B. Davidson). Paul felt that he stood at the parting of the ways; one age was drawing to its close, another was about to dawn. To him "the end of the age" was the end of the Jewish age *then* current; and "the age about to come" was the Christian age *now* current.

Was Paul mistaken and disappointed, and did he afterwards change his mind regarding the Parousia? Is this implied in his declaration, "I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better?" (Phil. i. 23). No, a thousand times no! To die was to go into the immediate presence of Christ in the unseen world. It was to walk with Him by sight. Paul's early hope of witnessing the Parousia continued unabated; but as

the day of life declined, and the presence of the Lord drew near, the two events began to synchronise ; and while cherishing the hope that he might live to see the mystic vision of the Son of man coming in His kingdom, he thought it better, even with that prospect in view, to depart and be with Christ in the heavenly glory.

(9) *He is King of a mystical kingdom.*—When Paul's conception of the Messiahship of Christ was spiritualised, his conception of His kingdom was necessarily spiritualised also. He henceforth looked for a kingdom which was "not of this world" ; a kingdom which would ultimately become externalised, but which in its earlier stages would be hidden from the eyes of men—a kingdom whose very existence would often be scoffingly denied. Not with outward pomp and show was that kingdom to come, but by the power of spiritual forces working silently and secretly as leaven.

It is a narrowing of the truth to say that the fundamental belief of Paul was that Jesus was to fulfil Messianic expectation. This is the view adopted by Paul Wernle. He says, "Christianity is but Judaism with its hopes fulfilled." It is that, of course ; but it is more, much more. It is the fulfilment of human hope. The Messianic mould into which Christianity was at first poured gave way with the weight of the larger truth

which it contained, and a wider category had to be found. The Messiah of the Jews became the Saviour of the race and the fulfiller of the world's hope. The national idea gave place to the world-idea, and a kingdom which was circumscribed to a kingdom which "ruleth over all."

The position taken by some modern scholars, that in Paul's teaching the kingdom of God is purely eschatological, is utterly untenable. Prof. Shailer Mathews affirms that the kingdom of God is represented in the New Testament as being "still in the future. Repentance was urged, not as a means of bringing in the kingdom, but as a preparation for membership in it, when in the Father's good pleasure it should appear. The kingdom is a gift of God, destined to come, not as the product of social evolution, but suddenly, as something already prepared before the foundation of the world. It is to be inherited and found rather than constructed." <sup>1</sup> J. Weiss occupies the same ground, yet he is forced to admit that "in Paul the eschatological tension is strongly counterbalanced by his Christ-mysticism. He who through the Spirit is united with Christ and lives in Him, has surmounted time and space." <sup>2</sup> On its formal side Paul's

<sup>1</sup> *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament*, by Shailer Mathews, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes*, p. 61.

conception of the kingdom is without doubt pre-vaillingly eschatological, but on its inner side it is a present spiritual reality—something realised in Christian consciousness. It is said to consist of “righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. xiv. 17); it comes “not in word, but in power” (1 Cor. iv. 20); it is entered into now—those who believe in Christ being delivered by God “out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. i. 13). Instead of being something which is to come in suddenly in the future in a full-fledged form, it is something which continues to grow by the power of its ever-expanding life.

There are three spheres in which the sovereignty of Christ is now being realised. It is being realised in the heart of the believer. There His kingdom is set up. There He reigns supreme, and reigns alone.

It is being realised in the unseen realm. When He rose from the dead He ascended on high, leading captivity captive (Eph. iv. 8)—not only vanquishing death, but delivering the pre-Christian righteous dead from Hades, mystically uniting them with those who had died in the Lord, judging them all according to their works, making them partakers of His resurrection glory, taking them into partnership in the work of

redemption, and bringing them into relations of practical helpfulness with the toiling, struggling saints on earth. In that upper sphere the Lordship of Christ is undisputed.

The sovereignty of Christ is also being realised in this world within an ever-widening circle. Whenever men accept His teachings as the law of their lives, they consciously or unconsciously bow before Him as their King ; and by taking Him as the Lord of the conscience, whose moral authority is supreme, they admit His right to the world's judgeship. Because of the supremacy of His moral authority He has been "ordained of God to be judge of quick and dead" (Acts x. 42)—judging not only the deeds, but "the secrets of men" (Rom. ii. 16). Judgment, as Paul saw it, was a process ending in a crisis,—it was at once continuous through every age, also a definite act at the end of every age. With his prophetic eye he saw that the Jewish nation was then ripening for judgment. Unfaithful to its high trust, it was about to be rejected. Events were about to culminate in the great and terrible day of the Lord. But his mind goes out much further, and grasps the idea of Christ as the universal King and Judge, before whose bar every soul of man must one day stand. The two ideas of a scenic and a universal judgment are combined in his declaration to the Athenians

that "God hath appointed a day, in the which He shall judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 31). The decisions of that great day will be final and irreversible so far as the special opportunities of the present are concerned ; upon them will hang the destiny of every soul, and his expulsion from or his place in the heavenly kingdom, in the ages to come.

In the eschatology of Paul the plan of God was to be consummated in Christ the unseen King. The allness which belongs to God was to belong to Him. He was to occupy the throne of universal dominion. There was no part of the universe over which His authority would not extend. The Alexandrian doctrine of the duality of the universe was alien to Paul's thought. He knew of only one head of the universe, Jesus Christ, "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of them that reign as kings, the Lord of them that rule as lords" (1 Tim. vi. 15). Believing that He was able to subdue all things unto Himself, he had no doubt as to the issue of the world conflict. Looking far enough down the future, he saw Christ triumphant over every foe ; His kingdom established on earth as it is in heaven ; and Israel's hope, and the world's hope—which are essentially and fundamentally one—fully realised.



## CHAPTER IV.

### AN EVANGELICAL MYSTIC.

**A**N evangelical mystic is one in whose scheme of thought the cross is central. He is one, as James Hinton expresses it, "who has learned on Calvary the secret of the universe." He looks upon all things in the revealing light of the cross. To his anointed eyes

"One Spirit—His,  
Who bore the platted thorns with bleeding brow,  
Rules universal nature."

He sees, as the Rev. J. R. Campbell remarks in a recent sermon, "all creation signed by the cross." This gives to nature a new meaning. When seen to be the work of Him who died upon the cross, it is brought into relation with the divine purpose of redemption.

To the evangelical mystic the cross is central also in God's revelation to man. In it all the converging lines of promise and prophecy meet ; from it the light of life, with which the whole earth is yet to be filled, radiates. Upon the dark

background of human sin it reveals God's eternal love as the secret of the universe. It furnishes the key to the revelation of God in history ; declaring in letters that can be read from the stars, that the new order which is being brought in has universal redemption for its final end. In the glory of the cross the present stands transfigured, and the future becomes radiant with hope. Because at the centre of all things is seen " the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne," there is the serenest optimism regarding the final issue of the age-long conflict between the forces of darkness and light.

As an example of a Christian mystic who was not evangelical, we might take William Law, the greatest of the English mystics. He rejected with contempt the whole system of evangelical theology. The God whom he worshipped and served was the God whom Christ has revealed ; but the moving *why* of Christian service, which is found in the cross, he strangely ignored. In his *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, he distinctly repudiates the evangelical faith in the words, " To have a true idea of Christianity we must not consider our blessed Lord in our stead, but as our representative, acting in our name, and with such particular merit as to make our joining with Him acceptable unto God." From these words it is clear that it is not in the vicarious

sacrifice of Christ, but in the "satisfaction of self-surrender" which that sacrifice evokes, that Law found the ground of human salvation. He mistook sanctification for justification; the ground of salvation for its evidence. He also ignored the revelation of Christ in the written word. He says, "If you ask where and how Christ is to be found? I answer, In your heart, and nowhere else." Here a half-truth is put for a whole truth. It is the clause "nowhere else" to which exception is taken. That Christ is to be found in the heart is not to be disputed; for there He ever abides, although, alas! often unknown. One of the recently discovered sayings of Christ reads, "So see Me in yourselves as one of you sees himself in water or in a mirror." But Christ is to be seen elsewhere than in the heart. He is to be seen in the gospel story; and many who have not been able to find Him in their hearts have found Him there.

Jacob Boehme, on the other hand, whose philosophy Law adopted and popularised, was an evangelical mystic. A common form of salutation in his letters to friends was, "The open fountain in the heart of Christ Jesus refresh and illumine us ever." In his practical writings he is as emphatic as Paul in his determination not to know anything among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. "There is no grace," he

says, "whereby we can come to adoption save simply in the blood and death of Christ. In Him alone hath God appointed to be a throne of grace in His own love, which He hath set in Him in the sweet name Jesus (from Jehovah). He is the only sacrifice God accepted to reconcile His anger." He adds, however, "But if the sacrifice is to avail for me, it must be wrought in me. The Father must communicate or beget His Son in my desire-of-faith, so that my faith's hunger may apprehend Him in His word of promise. Then I put Him on in His entire process of justification, in my inward ground, and straightway there begins in me the killing of the wrath of the devil, death, and hell, from the inward power of Christ's death." His dying words were, "O Thou Mighty Lord Sabaoth, save me according to Thy will. O Thou crucified Lord Jesus Christ, have pity on me, and receive me into Thy Kingdom."

The mystical life of the Quakers has been Christian but not Evangelical. The inner light which they have followed has come from Him who lighteneth every man coming into the world; but they have ignored the light of the historical Gospel, and of the Christ of history. They have sought immediate access to God; but they have not sought it by the new and living way of the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh. They have

looked upon the blood of Christ which saves, as the spirit of Christ which men receive into their hearts ; but they have not looked upon the blood shed upon Calvary as the manifestation of divine suffering love for the purpose of producing in men the spirit of Christ. And because they have failed to connect subjective experience with objective fact, they have been shorn of propagating power.<sup>1</sup>

Paul's mysticism was both Christian and Evangelical. It drew its inspiration from the cross. It was rooted in fellowship with a Saviour who was crucified on Calvary, who rose from the dead, and who still bears the print of the nails. His mysticism, as Professor Bruce truly says, " was all his own " ; and was not borrowed from any foreign source.<sup>2</sup> There is no evidence whatever that Paul was acquainted with Philo, the father of religious mysticism. His mystical life came from his relation with Christ ; and

<sup>1</sup> It should be said that this charge does not hold true with respect to most of the early Friends. Dr. Rufus M. Jones, one of their latest advocates, claims, and with good reason, that they " did not minimise the importance of the Scriptures, or of the historical Christ and His work for human redemption. The Christ who enlightened their souls was, they believed, the risen and ever-living Christ—the same Person who healed the sick in Galilee and preached the gospel to the poor under the Syrian sky, and who died for our sakes outside the gate of Jerusalem. One of the great fruits of the Incarnation and Passion, according to their view, was the permanent presence of Christ among men in an inward and spiritual manner, bringing to effect within what His outward life had made possible " (*Social Law in the Spiritual World*, pp. 167, 168).

<sup>2</sup> *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, p. 224.

especially from his relation with Christ as his crucified Redeemer. It found the fulness of its realisation in identification with Christ in His passion, so that it was transacted over again in him.

This is the truth taught in the great classic text of evangelical mysticism found in Gal. ii. 20, in which Paul lays bare the secret of his inner life. He there affirms, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." In these pregnant words we have the main parts of a chain of symbolism in which Paul sets forth the successive stages of the Christian life. Four distinct stages of mystical experience are portrayed; and these are followed by an explanation of the ground out of which this mystical experience grows.

1. *Crucifixion*.—The statement, "I have been crucified with Christ," certainly means, "Christ was crucified for me; He died for me upon the cross, so that I have now become dead to the law." But it means more than that. It means, "By His crucifixion I have been crucified." The sacrifice of Calvary was not merely something accomplished for Paul; something wrought



out *for* him ; it was something accomplished *in* him ; something inward and vital. Looking back, he saw two men crucified on the cross, Christ and himself ; looking within, he saw a man in whom the sacrifice of the cross had been transacted. The words in which the idea of self-crucifixion are expressed may be the language of poetry, yet they are the record of a conscious and distinct experience. To the cross of Christ Paul's old sinful, selfish nature had been nailed. It had died a bitter and humbling death. As the result of this inward crucifixion of himself, Paul had become "crucified to the world and the world to him." Henceforth he bore not only upon his body the marks of the Lord Jesus ; he bore also upon his soul the inward *stigmata* which belong to everyone who had been crucified with Christ.

The mystics have sometimes made this identification with Christ in His crucifixion a literal thing. It is recorded of Heinrich Suso, the German mystic, that he wore an under-garment of leather into which a hundred and fifty sharp nails were fashioned, and upon his neck he bore a cross of wood driven full of spikes. As his flesh was pierced and lacerated, he constantly cried out in agony, "Alas, gentle God, what a dying is this !" Could there have been a greater travesty on the inward crucifixion which

God demands, and which Paul experienced? The flesh is to be crucified, not literally, but in "the passions and lusts thereof" (Gal. v. 24). It is the sinful self that deserves and needs crucifying. Into every Christian life crucifixion must come. "One desire alone doth God allow," says St. Juan of the Cross, "that of obeying Him and carrying the cross." Or, we may put it thus, one desire alone doth God allow, that of being crucified with Christ. When crucified with Him, the prints of the nails which we will bear will be the marks of sacrifice endured in His name and through His power.

2. *Death*.—The idea of crucifixion carries with it the idea of death; for death is the inevitable result of crucifixion. The crucified soul becomes identified with Christ in His death; Christ's death is "mystically acted" in him; through Christ's death he has died, his old sinful nature having given up the ghost. He has become dead to the law, dead to sin, dead to the world. In other words, the objective fact of Christ's death has become to him a subjective experience.

Therefore, in saying, "I have been crucified with Christ," Paul means, "I have died with Christ through crucifixion"—died legally and spiritually. "In his deadness to the law—the result of faith in Christ—was also deadness

to sin.”<sup>1</sup> The idea of the Christian being “dead with Christ” to the law and to sin is a common one with Paul. He is “dead to the law through the body of Christ” (Rom. vii. 4); he is told to reckon himself “to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. vi. 11). To the Colossians Paul writes, “Ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (iii. 3). He reminds the Ephesians that they were “dead through their trespasses and sins” (ii. 1). In all these references there is a suggested contrast between being dead *in* sin and dead *to* sin. The death in sin is something from which the Christian is delivered; the death to sin is something which he experiences. The woman who gives herself up to pleasure is said to be “dead while she liveth” (1 Tim. v. 6)—she is a moving tomb; her life is a living death. It is also said that “the mind of the flesh is death” (Rom. viii. 6)—it holds within it the seed, the potency of death. The life of the unrenewed man is a living death, the life of the Christian is a dying life; the one lives to die, the other dies to live. Pertinent to this thought are the words of Archbishop Leighton, “whose wishes to live after death must die before death comes.”

The story is told of a Franciscan monk who was stubborn and self-willed, and refused to obey

<sup>1</sup> Toy's *Judaism and Christianity*, p. 209.

the rules of the order. His associates dug a deep grave, and placed him in it, in an upright position. As they filled in the earth they asked, "Is your self-will dead yet?" There was no response. When the earth reached his shoulders the question was repeated. Still there was no response. When it reached his lips he was asked, "Are you dead now?" He meekly answered, "I am dead." The sign that any man is dead is that he has ceased to struggle. He is dead when he has surrendered his will completely to the will of Christ.

The figure of death must not, however, be taken too literally. It is not to be pushed to the extreme, to which Molinos pushes it in the remark, "Happy is that state of soul which has slain or annihilated itself." The death of our sinful nature is not the result of an act of moral suicide, nor does it end in the annihilation of self. It is Christ who slays it. It receives its death wound the moment it is nailed to His cross. It is then under sentence of death, and is as good as dead. It may be compared to a tree, the bark of which has been cut all around, and which is virtually a dead tree; and hence may be spoken of as if it were already dead. That the death struggle is often long and painful, is shown in a chapter from the life of Tauler. When he was at the height of his popularity,

swaying vast crowds with his marvellous eloquence, one day a stranger from Switzerland, who sat in the audience, came up to him at the close of the service, and said, "I want to confess to you." He was not long in the presence of the stranger before he felt that he had need to confess to him. He opened his heart to him, telling him that his life had been a failure, and that beneath a self-satisfied exterior he concealed a hungry heart. He had not found the centre of rest; and he said, "What must I do?" "You must die, Herr Tauler." "Die?" said he. "Yes, you will never get the true sense of power until you die to your own." For two years Tauler was silent. He took his part in the work of the convent, but never went beyond its walls. When his fellow-monks were asked the reason of his silence, they laughingly replied, "Oh, poor fellow, the devil's clawing him a bit, that's all," or, "Spiritual pride, Lucifer's sin, Lucifer's sin!" Yielding to the importunity of his friends, at last he agreed to preach. The church was filled with an eager, expectant throng. But Tauler could not utter a single word. As the vast audience waited breathless, he stood up before them, hiding his face in his hands and sobbing. His discomfiture and humiliation were complete. The people began to cast reproach upon their fallen idol. A month after,

when he had recovered himself, he asked permission to preach. This time he began talking to the poor people who had gathered around him, and preaching sermons of the heart. Soon his fame spread, and the people flocked to hear him ; for the spirit of the Lord was upon him to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to bring stout-hearted rebels to the feet of Christ. Herr Tauler was now dead ; he had died to his own power, that the power of Christ might rest upon him.

Let those who would be dead to self, like Tauler, pray in the words of "The Golden Legend" :

" If my feeble prayer can reach Thee,  
O my Saviour, I beseech Thee,  
Even as Thou hast died for me,  
More sincerely  
Let me follow where Thou ledest.  
Let me, bleeding as Thou bleedest,  
Die, if dying I may give  
Life to one who asks to live;  
And more nearly,  
Dying thus, resemble Thee."

3. *Burial*.—Elsewhere Paul adds another link to the chain of symbolism, in which the successive stages of the Christian life are expressed. Speaking not as a literalist, but as a mystic, he says, "We were buried with Him" (Christ) "through baptism unto death" (Rom. vi. 4). As crucifixion results in death, so death is followed by burial. When the burial is said to take



place by baptism, the term baptism is evidently used as a metonymy, implying that the terms are exchanged, so that the sign is made to stand for the thing signified. The baptism is ceremonial, the burial is spiritual. The baptism is the outward sign of a union with Christ, so close and intimate that the baptized believer is said to be "buried with Him." Having become dead to the world, he now lies in a spiritual tomb buried to the world. His self-life which was crucified with Christ unto death is now put out of sight, buried in His grave.

4. *Life*. — Returning to the text in Gal. ii. 20, we find the man who was crucified, dead and buried, exclaiming, "Nevertheless I live." Here is a paradox which no logic can explain. The crucified man is alive—very much alive. He has been "quickened from the dead." He has died to live. Never for a moment has he lost the sense of identity and continuity. He lives in the flesh a human individual life. He does not separate himself from the world of men around him. Yet, while living in the flesh, he does not live after the flesh. His body, the temple of God, and the organ through which his life is expressed, he does not dishonour. But it is very much in the way. It is "a body of death"—a corpse hanging around the neck of the soul, impeding the freedom of its move-

ments, and hindering it in many ways from attaining the fulness of its life. The living thing is his soul, which Christ has quickened.

In his preface to *Theologia Germanica*, Luther describes the object of that book to be, to set forth "how Adam is to die, and Christ to live in us." The way to life is said to be through death, or rather through the conquest of death by life. The root of sin is self-will; and the soul becomes alive unto God only when self-will has been destroyed. And this is Paul's doctrine.

But Paul goes a step further, declaring, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." There is here a contrast between the past and the present. The negation, the cessation of one form of life, has taken place. It is not the former self that lives. That self has been displaced by another. An act of inward substitution has taken place. A new centre of moral selfhood, or moral personality, has been formed. The highest self-realisation has been attained—life has been enthroned, not dethroned. What has taken place is "an annulling of the life of self, and of all selfish desires and impulses; or a blending of my will with the mind and will of Christ, so absolute that, in a sense, my private, particular self may be said to have become

extinct, and my being to be absorbed and lost in His life.”<sup>1</sup>

It is a profound saying of Plato, that “God holds the soul attached to Himself by the root.” The root of attachment is the “I,” the centre of personality. When the “I” is attached to God, a fusion of life with life takes place; and that condition of complete self-surrender is reached, expressed in the words:

“Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.”

By the root of his being Christ took hold of Paul. He became within him a new self; so that He thought through Paul’s mind, loved through his heart, and acted through his will. He was the active principle of his life; the inward power that controlled his outward deeds. The bold words of Catherine of Genoa—“I find no more *me*; there is no longer any other *I*, but God”—may therefore be justified if taken in a moral sense. The great German Reformer was wont to point to his heart and say, “Luther is not here: he has moved out, Christ lives here.”

When Paul was able to say, “Christ liveth in me,” a great transformation took place. Paul the Apostle was a different man from Saul of Tarsus. He lived above himself. He lived a

<sup>1</sup> *Fundamental Ideas of Christianity*, Principal John Caird, vol. ii, p. 230.

higher and holier life than he could ever have lived had he not felt the contagion of Christ's spirit, and had not Christ taken possession of his heart. From the time that the touch of Christ's love made him live, a new relationship was established between him and Christ, and out of that new relationship had come a new character. His heart indwelt by Christ had become the presence chamber of a king. There was a reciprocal indwelling in which the mightier spirit prevailed, and that oneness of affection was reached, where

"Heart to heart in concord beat,  
And the lover is beloved."

It is in this oneness of love with Christ that Dr. Sanday finds the key to Paul's experience.

An Eastern parable tells of one who came to the door of his beloved and knocked. "Who is there?" asked a voice. The reply was, "It is I," to which the voice made answer: "This house will not hold both thee and me." The lover went out into the desert to fast and pray. After a year of solitude and self-examination, he knocked again. "Who is there?" again asked the voice. "It is thyself," was the reply. The door was opened. The door is at once opened when Christ is welcomed to occupy the heart alone, that He may create within it a new consciousness, and establish within it a new centre

of authority. He will brook no rival. All of life must be ruled by His sovereign will. The heart into which He enters must be possessed by Him wholly and for ever. A permanent condition is implied in the word "liveth." It is not merely "Christ is alive in me," but He "liveth in me"; dwelling in me, as Bishop Moule has said, "not as a guest precariously detained, but as a master resident in his proper home." He has come to go no more out for ever.

5. *Resurrection.* — The soul that Christ quickens rises from the grave in which it was buried, to walk with Him in newness of life. "If we have been united (literally, grown together) with Him by the likeness of His death, we shall be also by the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. vi. 5). Paul links together the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection life of the Christian. He looks upon resurrection not only as a historical fact authentic and irrefutable, but as a figure of spiritual life, and also as the power by which that life is produced. He desires that Christians might know Christ "and the power of the resurrection" (Phil. iii. 10); that is, that they might know Him in the fulness of experimental knowledge, and in the power which His resurrection exercises. Resurrection is with him more than a doctrine, it is

an experience ; it is more than a far-off hope, it is a present reality ; it is more than a comforting belief, it is a vitalising principle. It is not enough to know *about* the resurrection of Christ : His resurrection power must be experienced, and the soul lifted out of weakness into strength, out of sorrow into gladness, out of death into life. To know the power of His resurrection is to experience that which answers to it ; it is to be raised up with Him to a life resembling His ; it is to feel the touch of His warm, vivifying influence, so that the better nature will sprout through the clods of earthliness, and expand and blossom in the sunshine of His love.

6. *Ascension*.—In Paul's completed chain of symbolism, ascension has a place. With fine insight Professor Bruce speaks of him as "urging Christians to complete the process of mystical identification with Christ by ascending with Him into heaven." <sup>1</sup> In this way we are to interpret his words, "If ye then were raised together with Christ, seek the things which are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things which are above, not on the things which are upon the earth" (Col. iii. 1, 2). The immortal hope is to be a tonic, not an opiate. Having been raised with Christ,

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, p. 219.



Christians are to aspire after heavenly things. Life is to become an ascent. Worldly ambitions are to fade out ; earthly honours are to be no longer sought. The soul is to ascend above all unworthy aims and ideals. Instead of gravitating earthward, it is to soar heavenward. It is to overcome the downward pull of the flesh by the upward push of the divine power working within. "As fire ascending seeks the sun," it is to ascend into its native element, and enter into the glory of the heavenly life.

This ascent of life is not only "with Christ," it is also *through* Christ. It is accomplished in His company and through His power. He at once leads the way, and gives the power that upholds us in our upward flight.

We thus see that the whole process of Christ's redemption is repeated in every Christian. His whole nature is crucified ; through crucifixion he dies unto sin and is freed from its condemning and enslaving power ; he is buried to the world and lives a hidden life ; he is quickened from the dead and stands upon his feet a man new made ; he ascends into the heavenly life, in the glory of which he is transfigured. It is within the soul that all these experiences take place. Crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension are all facts in the life of the spirit ; and they

are all realised through the union of the believing soul with Christ.

7. *The explanation of this mystical experience.*—In Gal. ii. 20, Paul makes clear the way in which the moral transformation which he describes takes place. He says of himself: “That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” The life now lived, which is so different from that which was once lived, is a life that has faith for its foundation, love for its inspiration, and Christlikeness of character for its end. The Christ with whom he inwardly identified himself, and with whom his life is indissolubly bound up, is the Son of God who out of love gave Himself for him; and the faith by which he lives, the faith from which his new ethical experience springs, is a faith which has for its object the Christ who loved him unto death—pouring out His life on Calvary for his redemption.

By identifying the Christ of experience with the Christ of history, Paul connects the mystical union of the believer with Christ with the historical union of Christ with men. The Christ with whom the believer is mystically united is the Christ who once lived here among men; the Christ with whom He is crucified is the Christ who was crucified for him; the Christ with

whom he dies is the Christ who died in his room and stead ; the Christ with whom he is buried is the Christ who became for him a tenant of the tomb ; the Christ with whom he is risen is the Christ who for his justification rose from the dead ; the Christ with whom he ascends into the heavenly life is the Christ who for his sake ascended into heaven itself that He might fill his life with His saving power. In a word, the Christ with whom he identifies himself subjectively in all that he experiences, is the Christ with whom he identifies himself objectively in all that He did on his behalf.

But Paul goes a step further, and bases the ethical life of the Christian upon what Christ has accomplished for him as his Saviour. It is because Christ died that he dies ; it is because Christ lives that he lives. The dying to sin and living to God do not take the place of Christ's sacrifice, they are the results of it. To say that " Christ's death is died by believers rather than theirs by Him " (so John Scott Lidgett), is to reverse Paul's thought. What ought to be said is that " believers die Christ's death, because Christ has died their death." (So Dr. James Denney.) From a look at the Crucified One come death to sin and life to righteousness. The great evangelical motive which lies behind every life which has " its

fruit unto holiness," is revealed in the words, "the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died : and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again " (2 Cor. v. 14, 15).

In Paul's theology the subjective and objective sides of truth do not exclude each other. If there is anything which he makes clearer than another, it is that the mystical life is generated by faith in the redeeming Son of God. His mysticism is grounded in the external ; it is rooted in the soil of a historical revelation. He would have accepted the motto of the mystics, "Our salvation is in the life of Jesus Christ with us," provided only that the distinction between the substance and ground of salvation was not rubbed out. The substance of our salvation is undoubtedly in the life of Christ within us, but its ground is the Christ without us ; and it is by faith in the life that He lived and the death that He died that His life is inwrought within our hearts.

Paul seeks to safeguard the doctrine of grace by showing that from the revelation of Christ to us will come the revelation of Christ in us ; that the appropriation of the benefits of His sacrifice will be followed by the acceptance of

the obligations which we owe to Him as the sacrificer ; that along with the identification of ourselves in what He did and suffered will come the inward identification with Him as the life of the soul. Through this inward experience Christ will be made real ; apart from it He remains only a name. Inward and personal this experience is ; but it is not esoteric in its nature. It comes to all who bring themselves into vital relation with Christ.

It is the fashion to point approvingly to the fruits of the mystical union, while making no acknowledgment of the source from which they spring. " You have various lives of Christ," says John Ruskin, " German and other, lately provided among your severely historical studies—some critical and some sentimental. But there is only one light in which you can read the life of Christ—the light of the life which you now live in the flesh, and that not the material but the won life—" nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is a true testimony ; but it must not be forgotten that the victorious life in the light of which Ruskin would have us read the life of Christ has for its hidden principle faith in the Christ of history, who loved sinful men and for love's sake gave Himself for them in all that He did and suffered. Throughout the Christian centuries the cross

of Calvary, on which our blessed Redeemer has died, has ever been acknowledged to be the source of the power by which the inner fruits of Christian experience and the outer fruits of Christian service have been produced.



## CHAPTER V.

### A RATIONAL MYSTIC.

THE direct vision and conscious experience of truth after which the mystic aspires is supra-rational; but it is neither irrational, unrational, nor contra-rational. It goes beyond reason, but it is not contrary to it. "The pure in heart see God"—the conception of God which comes to them is not something which they have reasoned out, but something which they have seen. "All minds," says Emerson, "open into the infinite mind," and there are other doors through which they open besides that of reason. It is a wise warning of Horatio W. Dresser, that "the rationalist who disparages all mystics as fanatics may be condemning one half of life's reality; while the mystic who discounts reason may thereby defeat his entire object as a public teacher."<sup>1</sup> The bridge that spans the river of spiritual truth does not rest upon a single pier. On the hither side it rests upon

<sup>1</sup> *Man and the Divine Order*, p. 21.

reason; on the thither side it rests upon mysticism.

Professor James distinguishes between the mystical consciousness which gives "direct perception of the invisible," and "the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness which is based on the understanding or senses alone," and regards them as opening different orders or kinds of truth, possessing different functions. This splitting up of consciousness into two separate parts, with separate spheres of operation, is as unscientific as it is confusing. Man has one consciousness which he may turn in different directions. In object not in kind the difference lies between the mystical and the rationalistic consciousness. We must therefore refuse to juggle with the idea of a double consciousness, and to act like a dexterous thimble-rigger who challenges the onlookers to indicate under which cover the illusive fact is to be found.

Between reason and the experiences of the mystical consciousness there is no incongruity. Man is a rational being, and it is incumbent upon him that he think and act rationally, and that he live the life of a rational being. His religion ought to be a reasonable religion. To accept an unreasonable religion would be to do violence to his nature. He is to be able to give to every man that asketh him "a reason for

the hope that is in him" (1 Pet. iii. 15); the service which he is to render unto God is "a reasonable service" (Rom. xii. 1). Any revelation addressed to him must appeal to his reason; and hence by his reason it is to be judged. "I speak as to wise men," says Paul; "judge ye what I say." And again, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). Because rationality is characteristic of revelation, John Locke is justified in saying, "He that would take away reason to make room for revelation puts out the light of both, and does much the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by telescope." The Cambridge Platonists were right in contending that to go against reason is to go against God; that "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, lighted by God, and lighting man to God;" and that man's very intuitions are "rooted in the latent reason."

Nor are reason and faith to be opposed to each other; for faith, as Pascal puts it, is "the highest act of reason." And "if reason contradicts a dictum," according to Jeremy Taylor, "it is not of the household of faith." But reason does not go far enough. Sooner or later it brings us to a dead wall. In that wall the modern psychologist breaks open a door for

faith. Behind the wall is a new realm of things which he cannot explain, but the existence of which he is forced to admit. The Neo-Platonists felt the same difficulty. Their position Vaughan describes in the words, "They are logicians as well as poets; they are not mystics till they have first been rationalists; and they have recourse at last to mysticism only to carry them whither they find reason cannot mount."<sup>1</sup>

Professor James treats mystical experiences as realities, and hence as proper subjects for scientific study. He takes the ground that the soul is open to invasion from a spiritual universe by which it is surrounded, and that the impressions which it receives from that universe "are as convincing to those who have them as any direct, sensible experience can be; and they are, as a rule, much more convincing than results established by logic ever are." Yet the moment that these mystical experiences in which "reason has been turned into light" are put into the crucible, the test to which they are subjected is that of their rationality. Convinced that they are real, we ask, are they also rational? Do they rest on rational grounds? Even if some parts of them are above reason, in the sense that we cannot comprehend their full significance, their rationality will be recognised just so far as

<sup>1</sup> *Hours with the Mystics*, vol. i. p. 78.

they are known. The far end of every spirit problem fades away into impenetrable darkness, but the end that is nearest us must in some measure be known, or how could we speak of it at all? And just because all truth is one, what lies beyond our ken must agree with what we know. The boundary-line of to-day may be crossed to-morrow; and what will then be discovered in the region which is now *terra incognita* will be in harmony with what we already know. We live in a rational universe in which "truth must be real in order to be rational, and rational in order to be real."

1. *As a rational mystic Paul was logical as well as mystical.*—He reasoned things out. He was never satisfied until he found a basis for faith in knowledge. He sought "full assurance of understanding" (Col. ii. 2). He strove to be "enriched with all knowledge" (1 Cor. i. 5), "to abound more and more in knowledge" (Phil. i. 9); to be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. i. 9). His intellectual training fitted him to weigh evidence. He accepted the claims of Christ at first only on the clearest evidence that He was risen. In his loftiest mystical flights he never lost his intellectual sanity; he never, like Tertullian, fell back upon the absurd position that the impossible is to be

accepted because it is the impossible. He was ready to turn the white light of reason upon his most transcendent experiences, to discover if possible the ground upon which they rested. His mystical consciousness was also a rational consciousness.

2. *As a rational mystic Paul tested his subjective experience by objective revelation.*— He followed the principle, “To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because they have no light in them ” (Isa. viii. 20). He was not like those mystics whose only Scriptures are themselves. He saw that the objective and subjective sides of religion are supplemental ; that they are the under and upper hemispheres of one globe ; that between objective truth and subjective experience there is an inseparable connection. He saw that only when a Christian is rooted and grounded in the knowledge of the historical Christ does he grow up into Him in all things ; that the religion that neglects the objective has nothing to live upon, and becomes arid and dead. Hence he put a high value upon the study of the Scriptures, and upon using correctly the form of “healthful teaching.” He was as far as possible from occupying the position of George Fox, who regarded all learning as futile because of the sufficiency of the inner light. He enjoins



Timothy, his son in the gospel, to "give heed to reading," to "abide in the teaching of the sacred writings," and to guard "the good deposit" of truth which had been committed to him. Hence, too, he made it his constant aim in preaching to set forth the objective gospel out of which all the fruits of righteousness spring; for he knew that Christian experience is not self-originated, and that neither does it come from "imageless contemplation"; but that it comes from contemplation of the manifested Christ, who is the light and the life of men—their life because their light.

It is a great misfortune when, for any cause, the historical element in the Christian religion is disparaged. Destroy the historicity of the events which gave Christian experience birth, or break connection with them, and it will not long survive. The argument of Dr. Dale, that faith might live upon the strength of the apostolic testimony to the power of the risen Christ, without the picture of the earthly Christ in the Gospels, is broken on the facts of history. Whenever the eyes of the soul have been turned wholly inward, and faith has not been nourished by contemplation of the historic facts of Christianity, religious life has withered at the roots.

3. *As a rational mystic Paul linked his experience on to that of his fellow-believers.*—He

maintained as stoutly as Luther did afterwards, that each one must find the truth for himself. In the first-hand knowledge of the living Christ he placed the ultimate ground of certainty. The inward witness of His presence was the white stone, upon which is written a new name which no man knoweth, save he that receiveth it. To this separate and independent witness, this witness which is peculiarly his own, every Christian must turn when assailed by doubt. He must "examine himself, whether he be in the faith" (2 Cor. xiii. 5). He must make his own consciousness the final court of appeal. This is the position taken by Professor James when he says that "mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over those to whom they come; but no authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept them uncritically."<sup>1</sup> The external witness to Himself that God has given all men possess; the inward self-evidencing witness is enjoyed by those who accept the outward witness. "He that believeth hath the witness *in himself*."

But while every man must find the truth for himself, he must seek for confirmation of what he finds in the experience of others. As he

<sup>1</sup> *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 422.

corrects the illusions of sense by general experience, he must correct the illusions of the soul in the same way. The essential thing in his experience is not what he possesses apart from others, but what he shares with others. Anyone may well question the validity of his experience if he stands alone. Recognising the weakness of egoistic mysticism, Paul, when speaking of what was outside the range of ordinary experience, uses the singular pronoun, but when speaking of what was general in Christian experience he uses the plural. Again and again he employs the expression "we know," to signify that his individual experience was verified by the experience of the whole body of believers. He walked with his fellow-Christians as far as they were able to accompany him; and if for a season he left them to ascend the mount alone, up to its cloud-encircled heights, he soon rejoined them, trudging by their side along the dusty road of duty.

Ritschl, who disliked pious sentimentality and despised mysticism, distrusted those experiences which make much of a living, personal, present Christ; yet he based his whole system upon the Christian consciousness; which, however, he generally narrowed down to mean the individual Christian consciousness. But no single experience can ever supply the criterion of truth.

When the search is made for what is essential, the whole sweep of Christian experience must be taken into account. The faith which a man works out alone he must finally test by "the collective experience of the Christian community."

4. *As a rational mystic Paul held that all the mysteries of religion are open and verifiable.*—The Christian religion has its mysteries—things beyond the power of human penetration—things which could not have been known apart from a special revelation. Its mysteries, unlike those of Greece and Rome, which were known only to the initiated, are open to all. "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God" (Matt. xiii. 11), was said by Jesus to the whole body of believers. From the hidden things of the spiritual kingdom the veil has been lifted, so that to everyone who meets the open vision with an open heart, the secrets of God stand disclosed.

Paul makes frequent use of the term "mystery," not in the ordinary sense of something incomprehensible to ordinary intelligence, but in the sense indicated of something once hidden which has now been revealed. He declares that the end for which he was made a minister of Christ was "to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested

to His saints : to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles ; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory " (Col. i. 26, 27). He speaks of the evangel which he preached as " the revelation of the mystery, which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and through the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandments of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience to the faith " (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). Gratefully he declares, " Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from all ages hath been hid in God, who created all things " (Eph. iii. 8, 9). During his imprisonment in Rome he longed for new opportunities " to speak the mystery of Christ " (Col. iv. 4). And when he unfolded the doctrine of the resurrection, he referred to it as something which was formerly concealed, but was now opened up that all might know it, saying, " Behold, I tell you a mystery " (1 Cor. xv. 51).

But although the veil has been lifted up from the things of the heavenly kingdom, so that they are open to all, there are some who see them more clearly, and have a deeper insight

into them, than others. Elisha saw things on the mountain side at Dothan which his servant did not see until his eyes were opened; and some Christians to-day see things which from other eyes are hid. In one of his most mystical utterances Paul indicates that there is a degree of knowledge attained by those who are specially illumined. "We speak wisdom," he says, "among the perfect"; that is, among "the fully initiated," or "full grown"; "yet a wisdom not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, which are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory" (1 Cor. ii. 6, 7). This secret wisdom of God, which must have for ever remained unknown except for revelation, and which is revealed to all Christians, but which is known by some more than others, consisted in the glory of the Messianic kingdom. Of the nature of that kingdom the princes of this world were ignorant. "Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory," but would have accorded to Him more than royal honours. The uncanonical quotation, "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him," refers not to things prepared in



heaven, but to the blessings and glories of the Messianic kingdom into the possession of which Christians now may enter. Of these blessings and glories it is said, "Unto us God revealed them through the Spirit." The Spirit through whom these communications are made is represented as coming from God, and hence as "knowing all things; yea, the depths of God"—the exhaustless treasures of His kingdom; and as making them known that Christians "might know the things that are freely given them of God." These divine secrets, touching the Messianic kingdom, which are revealed by the Spirit, are declared "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth." They are given in the inward language of the soul, and are not understood by the natural man, but only by the spiritual man; for he alone holds the key to their interpretation.

The broad principle which Paul lays down is that spiritual truth needs more than intellectual comprehension. It cannot be proved by the same tests which are applied to a problem of Euclid. There is a spiritual as well as a rational verification of truth. In the declaration, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. x. 10), Paul does not draw a sharp distinction between the emotions and the cognitive faculties; by "the heart" he means the whole

inner nature—reason, feeling, and will combined ; yet the choice of this word shows that he is looking at the ethical side of faith. When truth has a moral quality, its acceptance is conditioned on the state of the heart. Spiritual-mindedness is a condition of illumination. The things that lie beyond the sphere of the senses are said to be prepared by God “for them that love Him.” “We must love divine things before we can know them,” says Pascal. To the same effect are the words of Inge : “The true hierophant of the mysteries of God is love.” To which may be added the saying of Clement : “The more a man loves, the more deeply does he penetrate into God.”

The Christian initiates are not a favoured class ; nor are they necessarily those of large intellectual equipment. They are those who have opened their hearts to the truth in love, in humility, and in sincerity. They are often babes to whose simplicity of heart things are revealed which are “hid from the wise and understanding” (Luke x. 21). The distinction which Paul draws between the carnal and the spiritual Christian does not indicate a difference in order, but in grade. The carnal Christian is one who is not dominated by the Spirit ; the spiritual Christian is one who has yielded to the Spirit’s action on his heart, and is being led by him into all the

truth ; the carnal Christian lives in the basement of his nature, the spiritual Christian lives in the upper chamber, through whose crystal dome he sees the shining heavens.

Nor does Paul claim for the Christian initiates, as many mystics have done, a higher kind of knowledge than ordinary Christians possess. All that he claims is that they possess a larger measure of knowledge ; that they have gained for themselves a higher degree in the school of Christ ; that they have appropriated to themselves a larger portion of the inheritance which belongs to all alike. The deeper experience into which they have come is not like the esoteric doctrines of the Gnostics, which were capable of being apprehended only by the intellectual élite, but is something which every Christian can attain for himself, if he will only supply the conditions.

The possibility of all attaining unto the knowledge of the divine mysteries is implied in the affirmation of Paul, " We have the mind of Christ " (1 Cor. ii. 16). The mind of Christ has been revealed in His words, in His deeds, and in His life, in order that all might possess it. Christ turned Himself inside out. He gave His mind to the world as no one else ever did. And now we can look at things through His eyes. We can know what He thought about

Himself, about God, about man, about sin, about redemption, about the kingdom of God, and about the future life. His mind is to us the measure of truth. When we come to know it, inquiry is pushed no further, for ultimate truth has been reached. The consciousness of Jesus is the light in which all divine mysteries are irradiated.

The mind of Christ is the present possession of the Church. A sad day will it be for the Church if the mind of Paul regarding Christ should be substituted for the mind of Christ. While anxious to know what a master mind like that of Paul thought of Christ, she must be still more anxious to know what Christ thought. A first-hand knowledge and experience of Christ she cannot afford to miss. The Church of to-day is to stand where Paul himself stood, and find out for herself what Christ Himself thought, that in His thought she may rest as the final ground of authority for truth, and by it she may be guided as the true light which shows the feet of mortals the way through this world of shadows into the land of cloudless skies.

5. *As a rational mystic Paul holds to truths which his exuberant fancy sometimes darkens.*—In the sphere of symbolical mysticism he often makes use of metaphors which are sorely strained; but they are never irrational. He

runs along the edge of the precipice without toppling over. Especially is this true in his imaginative interpretation of historical events. He looks at things with the eye of a poet, and indulges to the full in a poet's licence. As a true mystic he believes that everything we see is the symbol of something unseen ; that there is always a circle within a circle ; that a religious symbol is simply the sign of something higher ; that truth had to be revealed in images, similitudes, and types ; and that in the inner spirit and not in outward forms is to be found the essence of religion.

A great service was rendered by Swedenborg to the Church in the development of this element in Paul's teaching by the doctrine of correspondences. To the Swedish seer everything visible is the image of an invisible reality ; the world of nature an analogue of the world of spirit. His teaching accentuates the question :

“ What if earth

Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein

Each to each other like, more than on earth is thought ? ”

In the rites of the Christian as well as of the Jewish religion, he sees shadows of heavenly things, “ the patterns of things in the heavens ” ; and if he sometimes errs in interpreting the literal as symbolical, and the symbolical as literal, he furnishes an important clue to the

right understanding of the figurative language of Scripture.

There are large portions of Paul's writings which open themselves only to those who have the mystical key. They are to be interpreted according to their internal sense. The allegory of the two Adams in 1 Cor. xv. 45-49 is an instance. "The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth earthy; the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Upon this double headship of the race was built up the federal theology with its correlated doctrines of vicarious sin and vicarious righteousness; but Paul's words could no more bear the weight which that system laid upon them, than they can bear the weight of the more modern idea of "the man from heaven," or "the heavenly man," as a middle term denoting merely "the heavenly origin characterising the nature of the whole person." The two Adams are type and antitype; from the one comes our natural inheritance, from the other our spiritual inherit-



ance ; from the one comes physical death, from the other comes resurrection power : " For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive " (Rom. v. 14). The first Adam is the type of what is mortal and perishing, he is " a living soul," part of the universal life into which he returns ; the second Adam is " a life-giving spirit," deathless in being, and all-pervasive in His quickening power : the first Adam is the world-type whose likeness all men bear ; the second Adam is the spiritual archetype of humanity, into whose glorious image every Christian is yet to be transformed : the first Adam is the head of a sinful, dying race ; the second Adam is the head of a new humanity in which His restoring power is as far-reaching as was the ruinous effect of the first man's sin : " for as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous " (Rom. v. 19). Throughout the entire antithesis, redemption is looked upon by Paul as a racial act. The crown of victorious power is put upon the head of the second Adam. In Him the whole race enters upon an upward plane by becoming the subject of a new heredity.

After the Rabbinical fashion, Paul, in contrasting the law and the Gospel, makes use of historical matter in an allegorical rather than in

a literal sense. His argument runs, "Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, and one by the free-woman. Howbeit the son by the handmaid is born after the flesh ; but the son by the free-woman is born through promise. Which things contain an allegory ; for these women are two covenants, one from Mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar " (Gal. iv. 22-24). Hagar the mother of Ishmael and Sarah the mother of Isaac are taken to represent two opposing religious ideals. The one "answereth to the Jerusalem which now is," the other to "the Jerusalem which is above"—the centre of the Messianic kingdom in its glorious realisation ; the one is founded upon a covenant of law, the other upon a covenant of grace ; the one appeals to fear, the other to love ; the one gendereth to bondage, the other leads to freedom. It is generally admitted that Paul's allegory fails to hold water ; and that the argument drawn from it is far-fetched, and far from convincing. Luther says of it frankly that it is "too weak to stand the test." Yet the truth for which Paul contends is independent of its setting ; and it is of inestimable value to-day as an antidote to the Judaizing tendency to enthrone the letter and change a religion of love into a religion of law. It is also in perfect harmony with the dualistic psychology which plays

such a prominent part in his teaching. These two types—the legalist and the emancipated Christian—often recur. Between them there is eternal antagonism, unceasing conflict ; for “ he that is born after the flesh ” still persecutes “ him that is born after the Spirit.” But there is comfort in the assurance with which Paul ends his allegory, that “ the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the free-woman,” for to the children of the free the future belongs.

In the mystical allusion to the one seed and the many seeds in Gal. iii. 15, 17, Paul admits that he speaks “ after the manner of men.” The point he seeks to establish is, that if a human covenant when once it has been legally confirmed stands inviolate in spite of additions which may be made to it, so the Abrahamic covenant made and ratified of old by God cannot be annulled by the law coming after. His argument is, “ Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many ; but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ.” The bearing of these words upon the point at issue it is difficult, if not impossible, to see. One explanation is to the effect that the one seed refers to the Jewish people to whom the promise was originally given, and the many seeds to the aggregation of believers making up the mystical body of Christ. Another,

and perhaps a more reasonable explanation, is that the promise made to Abraham and his seed did not extend to all the varied seeds that might come from his loins, but was limited to one line of descent, namely, the one from which Christ came according to the flesh. Dr. Doddridge takes this view, and remarks that it is presented by Paul "in bad Greek, but with good sense and reason." By some the title "Christ" is used in a mystical sense, to denote Christ and His Church; as in the text, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 12). It is better, however, to regard the term "seed" as applied to Christ as a collective term signifying not "Jesus in individual humanity, but the Messiah so promised" (Eadie). To this it must be added that the benefits of the Abrahamic covenant which was fulfilled in Christ, extend to all His people; so that Paul could say of uncircumcised Gentiles, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 29). In this way the promise originally made to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18), finds its largest possible fulfilment.

These instances of Paul's symbolical mysticism suffice to show that even when his logic limps,

and his metaphors are ridden almost to death, his thought moves on to its destined goal. He has very little of the historical imagination which invests old scenes with new life ; he has interest in historical things only as they suggest some underlying spiritual truth. The Old Testament writings are "living oracles." The proof that they are "God-breathed" is that they are spiritually profitable (2 Tim. iii. 16) ; their value is found in their hidden sense. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. iii. 6). In accordance with this principle of interpretation, Moses is a type of Christ ; the passover, which was the means of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, is the type of the deliverance of the race from sin by "Christ our passover, who hath been sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7) ; the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea is a type of baptism—the watery walls, by which the fleeing Israelites were besprayed, being walls of separation from the past ; the manna that came from the skies and the water that flowed from the smitten rock are the types of spiritual meat and drink ; the sacrifices offered up upon Jewish altars are types of the sacrifices of self, offered first by Christ and then by the Christian ; the temple at Jerusalem is the type of the body, and of the mystic temple of redeemed souls. In everything there is a double meaning,—the



literal and the spiritual,—and if the things that he saw were not always there to see, they were none the less true on that account. In interpreting Paul's symbolical mysticism, just as in interpreting Æsop's fables, it is necessary to distinguish between fact and truth.

6. *As a rational mystic Paul gave himself to the cultivation of what was normal and healthy in Christian experience.* There is a prevailing idea that mystical experience is something abnormal ; that it belongs to an unhealthy and badly-balanced temperament. The experience of Paul shows that this is not necessarily the case. There was not a thread of morbidness in his nature. He was characterised by healthy-mindedness. He avoided excesses. He was no "faddist." The exceptional things in his experience he kept locked up in his own heart. He knew that every form of religious life has its dangers, and that a full cup is easily spilled. Even when "intoxicated with the Spirit," he kept his poise. No one ever held the wayward impulses of his higher and his lower natures more firmly in check. Under God, he was master of himself.

Alas! the history of mysticism furnishes abundant evidence of a tendency to the abnormal and the unhealthy. There is a short step between ripeness and rottenness. "Thin partitions do the parts divide" between the spiritual and the



sensuous. Many mystics have been spiritual wantons, ravished with love divine. They have found in the Song of Solomon a vehicle of expression for an amorousness which they imagined to be all of heaven, but from which erotic elements were not wholly absent. Their "spiritual nuptials" and "divine caresses" had often the suggestion of a fleshly taint. This tendency has been especially strong among the Roman Catholic mystics. That modern religionists are not altogether free from it is evidenced by the popularity of a hymn like the following :

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,  
Safe on His gentle breast ;  
There by His love o'ershaded,  
Sweetly my soul shall rest."

Others than the mystics are apt to become "the victims of sensuous metaphor," and the utmost vigilance is demanded to guard against a danger to which the soul is most exposed when in its highest moods.

7. *As a rational mystic Paul grounded his belief in spiritual phenomena upon the testimony of consciousness.*—He accepted the validity of the testimony of consciousness regarding things that transcended the sphere of the senses. Experience was to him the basis of certainty. He never went behind the record of his own consciousness. What he himself knew and experi-

enced of God and of Christ was something of which he could never be dispossessed.

Mysticism has always sought in the conscious self a ground of certainty which the Church has failed to give. It has sprung from the effort of man to get behind the phenomenal to the hidden soul and principle of things. It expresses the search of man for the inward reality wrapped up in the outward symbol, and for the living heart of the microcosm in which the macrocosm is mirrored.

But mysticism believes in the existence of things which lie concealed below the line of consciousness. It believes in a sub-conscious self which "has its springs in the infinite and the eternal"; and whose upwelling tides show that in the deepest depths of his nature man is connected with something which transcends all that he can ever know or experience. The ordinary consciousness is a solitary rock jutting up out of dark and silent depths. The consciousness which lies below it—the subliminal self of the modern psychologist—is the transcendental consciousness to which Kant relegated the forms of knowledge which transcend experience. Referring to this unexplored domain, Richter says, "We attribute far too small dimensions to the rich empire of self if we omit from it the unconscious region, which resembles a dual continent. The world which our memory

peoples only reveals in its revolution a few luminous points at a time, while its immense and teeming mass remains in shade." For the first sign of emergence of things from these profound depths the mystic is ever on the watch. He seeks to know the bare and naked truth, the truth in its essence and in its original elements. He wants to be present when cosmos rises out of chaos. He wants to witness every sunrise of the soul. He wants, when the fountain of divine light and life breaks forth, to lie low before the Most High, with nothing to intercept the vision of His glory or to contaminate the stream of His cleansing power which flows into his heart.

8. *As a rational mystic Paul did not despise the use of means.*—He knew that the *scala perfectionis*—the ladder of perfection—of which the mystic so fondly speaks, had to have its foot on the solid earth; and that its top was not to be reached at a single bound, but step by step, with progress painful and slow. He recognised the fact that certain things are of indispensable value as aids to devotion. Anything that was calculated to lift the soul upward, to purge the inward eyes, to strengthen faith and courage—to bring God nearer, to help him get through the outer crust of religion to the life-sustaining truths beneath, he prized and practised.

He valued the Church, its offices and ordinances, its worship and fellowship ; he valued “the words of faith and sound doctrine” by which the soul is nourished ; he valued subsidiary helps such as the “books and parchments” which he requested Timothy to send to him from Troas, where he had left them ; he valued prayer, and lived under the conviction that God’s grace was always on tap, ready to flow into his soul at the slightest touch of desire. He knew that spiritual life could be attained and sustained in no other way than in using as means of grace the aids which God has given ; and that if the earthen vessels in which the heavenly treasures are conveyed are thrown away, the heavenly treasures themselves will be lost.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A PRACTICAL MYSTIC.

SOME time ago Lord Rosebery described Oliver Cromwell by the felicitous phrase, "a practical mystic." This description might be applied to the Apostle Paul. He was in an emphatic sense a practical mystic. "His mysticism was the safeguard of his logic, and his intense practicality was the safeguard of his mysticism." He was a man of vision, yet not a visionary man ; a man of insight, yet a man of foresight ; a man of faith, yet a man of affairs ; a man whose vision of the heavenly Jerusalem did not shut out of sight the earthly Jerusalem ; a man whose enjoyment of his heavenly citizenship did not hinder him in the performance of the duties of his earthly citizenship ; a man who "summered high in bliss upon the hills of God," and who toiled and sacrificed in his Master's cause on earth.

That mystics have often been unpractical goes without the saying. Indeed, to the common

mind a mystic has come to mean one who is dreamy, moonstruck, speculative, unpractical. But there are mystics and mystics. Paul was a mystic of the first water, but his mysticism had hands and feet. He had revelations "exceeding great"—revelations which carried him into the limitless; and if for a time his toils were forgotten, and he seemed to be free from the burden of his responsibilities, the downward pull of duty was soon felt. Yet he was doubtless a better man and a better minister of Christ because of these revelations. By "the abundance of revelations" his abundant labours were made the lighter. Nor was his experience exceptional:

"There are in this loud stunning tide  
Of human care and crime,  
With whom the melodies abide  
Of the everlasting chime;  
Who carry music in their heart  
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart;  
Plying their task with busier feet,  
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

Of St. Ignatius, Professor James says, "He was a mystic, but his mysticism made him essentially one of the most powerfully practical human engines that ever lived." St. Bernard, who transformed the valley of Wormwood—so called because it was the covert of fierce banditti—into Clairvaux or Brightdale, with its famous abbey, which in those days of unrest



became a refuge for the oppressed, was a practical mystic. The German mystics, Eckhart and Tauler, who struck the spark that kindled the Reformation, were practical mystics. Eckhart was distinguished for his work of social and civic reform; and when, in 1348, the Black Death raged in Strasburg, and the city was deserted by all who could leave it, Tauler remained at his post, comforting the terror-stricken and caring for the sick. Luther, who drank deep at the fountain of mysticism, as his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians abundantly shows, was, as the world knows, a man whose life was spent in ceaseless activity. The Spanish mystics, St. Theresa and St. Juan of the Cross, lived lives of beneficent and self-denying service, and were angels of mercy to the miserable. Of William Law, the English mystic, his biographer says that his life was wholly given to devotion and charity. General Gordon was a mystic of the mystics, and his life was filled to the brim with heroic and unselfish deeds. It is a groundless assumption that sitting in heavenly places with Christ is incompatible with walking with Him in earthly places. The Lord takes His own up with Him into the holy mount, not that they may stay there, but that they may be fitted by what they see for the work which awaits them in the plain below.

1. *It was the aim of Paul, as a practical mystic, to unite the active and passive elements in his life.*—He did not sink into “a peace like that of Lethe’s deadly calm”; he did not abandon himself to religious delights to the neglect of religious duties; he did not sit in silent meditation, dreaming his life away, oblivious to the stern demands of the hour; he did not linger to enjoy the vision when the call of duty sounded; the music of the heavenly choirs which fell upon his ears did not drown the bitter cry of the disconsolate and the needy; his waiting upon God did not interfere with his working for God; the submission of his will to God did not put a check upon the forth-putting of his will in the service of man. Contrariwise, the contemplation of divine things quickened rather than paralysed his activity. It roused him to ethical energy, and led him on to ethical endeavour. In “energising towards the Eternal Mind,” he at the same time energised towards humanity. If he soared high, he did not lose himself in the clouds. From his loftiest flights he came back to the solid earth. The vision which he beheld had an ennobling influence upon his life. It was because he mounted up with the wings of an eagle that he was able to run on God’s errands without being weary, and walk in the way of arduous service without being faint.

We have a striking instance of a sudden descent from a lofty flight of speculation to the performance of present duty, when we connect the close of the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians with the beginning of the 16th chapter. The break between the chapters is an unfortunate one. Paul had been speaking of the resurrection and the life beyond; he had been declaring that the corruptible body must put on incorruption, and that death must be swallowed up in victory, when, after a jubilant outburst of triumph, he makes an abrupt application of his argument by saying, "Now, concerning the collection for the saints." It is as if he had said, "If you believe in the resurrection of the dead and in the life to come; if you believe in the certainty of the eternal reward,—how is that belief going to affect your conduct, and especially, how is it going to affect your contribution to the poor saints at Jerusalem?" Paul was evidently afraid that the vision of the future which he had given might lead to a transfer of interest from this world to the next, and he wished to prevent any life being wasted in star-gazing. As a practical mystic, he was anxious to have the vision of the future contribute to the improvement of the life of the present.

The best of the mystics were always mindful to combine contemplation and action, and to

emphasise the practical side of things. "What a man has taken in in contemplation, that he pours out in love," remarks Master Eckhart. Again he says, "It is better to feed the hungry than to see even such visions as Paul saw." To the same effect are the words of Tauler, "Spiritual enjoyments are the food of the soul, and are only to be taken for nourishment and support to help us in our outward work." To which he adds, "Works of love are more acceptable unto God than lofty contemplation."

2. *As a practical mystic Paul retained through all the changes in his life an unbroken sense of his own personality.*—His consciousness of self was the one permanent fact in his experience. Feeling might fluctuate, opinions change, choices be reversed, but the thinking, feeling, willing entity behind remained for ever the same. In such a casual remark as, "I was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" (1 Tim. i. 13), the continuity of personality is clearly implied. Morally he was no longer the man he once was, but in all the essential elements of his selfhood he had remained unchanged. Personal identity had continued, and he knew himself to be the same man since this moral change that he was before. His sense of personality was something that no inward and outward changes in his life could affect. It continued as distinct from its

outward forms of expression as the musician from the instrument upon which he plays. He could no more get away from himself than he could jump over his own shadow.

What is called the awakening of consciousness is simply the awakening of man to the sense of his selfhood. Tennyson describes how this awakening comes :

“ The baby new to earth and sky,  
What time his tender palm is prest  
Against the circle of the breast,  
Has never thought that ‘ this is I ’ :

But as he grows he gathers much,  
And finds the use of ‘ I,’ and ‘ me,’  
And finds ‘ I am not what I see,  
And other than the things I touch.’ ”

When man comes to himself he comes to know that he is a separate being ; he gains at once and for ever a sense of individual existence. Nor does this come by a process of reasoning or demonstration, but by direct intuition. The way of self-awakening is not the one pointed out in the famous dictum of Descartes, “ I think, therefore I am.” That dictum postulates rationality, and from that deduces personality ; but man awakens to the fact that he is a personal being before he awakens to the fact that he is a rational being. Hence we ought to reverse the dictum of Descartes, and say, “ I am, therefore I think.” The simple consciousness

of self is the innermost, the primary fact of consciousness.

Without the sense of unbroken self-consciousness there could be no individual progress; for in no other way could we build upon the experience of the past, and carry forward into to-morrow the gains of to-day. It ensures that nothing will be lost, and that in a deepened and enriched personality will be found a true life's best reward. It is here that the weakness of Eastern mysticism lies. By making absorption in the divine life the goal of existence; by seeking to lose self in God as a drop of water is lost in the goblet of wine into which it falls,—it benumbs the faculties of the soul, begets stagnation of life, and converts man into a moral mummy. To these results the vaunted Yogi doctrine of the Hindoo leads. It cultivates “a passion for nonentity,” the fruits of which appear in the moribund religious life of the India of to-day.

There is nothing which the practical mystic dreads and shuns more than the *via negativa* of the philosophical and speculative mystics, which leads through darkness into “nothingness”; and which is described by Inge as “an attempt to reach the universal by wiping out all the boundary-lines of the particular, and to gain infinity by reducing self and the world to



zero.”<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he seeks to tread the *via affirmativa* of positive conviction in the inviolability of personality, human and divine. He does not believe that the soul melts away like a snowflake when it soars upward into the heavenly light ; that spiritual form is lost in the divine substance, and that the operations of the soul end in a swoon. He looks for the consummation of his religious life not in a vacancy but in fulness, not in the loss of personality but in its enlargement. He knows that the attaining “unto all the fulness of God” (Eph. iii. 19), which Paul sets forth as the end of Christian striving, carries with it, and implies, the attaining unto all the fulness of self ; and that the losing of one’s life in God is the true and only way of finding it.

Whatever may be involved in the closest relationship of spirit with spirit, Dr. Rashdall is undoubtedly correct in affirming that “two spirits thinking and speaking alike will be for ever two and not one. Communion implies the existence of two spirits, and is destroyed when the union between them passes into identity.”<sup>2</sup> Realising this, the practical mystic does not forget that while one with God he is a separate and distinct being ; that he is under obligation to keep his individuality intact ; to

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> *Contentio Veritatis*, p. 36.

keep a firm hold of the rudder of his soul ; to hold himself to strict account ; to remember that he has an individual life to live, an individual work to do, an individual destiny to win. Living in God he at the same time lives his own life, ever careful that the crown which is won by fidelity to personal ideals be not snatched away.

The personality of man God respects. He wants every man to be himself, and to work out his destiny in his own way. To this thought Browning gives expression in the words :

“ God, whose pleasure brought  
Man into being, stands away  
As it were a hand-breadth off, to give  
Room for the newly made man to live,  
And look at Him from a place apart,  
And use his gifts of brain and heart.”

3. *As a practical mystic Paul was a virile man, robust and manly.*—His mysticism was thoroughly sane, and absolutely free from any emasculating, effeminating tendency. He took a man's place in the world, and did a man's work. Now, it must be admitted that mysticism has too often made its appeal to the feminine side of human nature ; and when allowed to run to seed it has led to effeminacy of character. We see this tendency exemplified in the Persian and Hindoo mystics. And it is not without significance that one of our modern mystical

cults originated with a woman, and is sustained, as similar cults are, mainly by women, or by men in whom the feminine element predominates. A complete character combines in right proportions the feminine and masculine qualities; but in a woman the womanly qualities ought to predominate, and in a man the masculine qualities. A womanly man and a manly woman are equally abnormal. Jacob Boehme describes the ideal human being as "androgynous," that is, as one in whom sex distinctions have been combined; and he holds that Jesus was such a being. In most of the portraits of Jesus the feminine predominates. The ideal portrait is that in which manly strength and womanly tenderness are harmoniously united.

The effeminating tendency in mysticism is something that has to be guarded against. Aware of its existence, Paul rings out the bugle call, "Quit ye like men, be strong" (1 Cor. xvi. 13). He insists upon the assiduous cultivation of manliness and strength, and brands the opposite qualities as reproachful to the Christian name.

4. *As a practical mystic Paul sought to realise the end of his life not by self-repression, but by self-expression.*—He looked upon the body not as the prison, but as the organ of the soul. He recognised the need of putting aside everything that would separate his soul from God, or hinder

him in his work. He buffeted his body, beat it black and blue, to bring it into subjection (1 Cor. ix. 27), that he might make it the pliant instrument of the soul. He endeavoured to keep the body "under," and keep his spirit on the top. We have no knowledge, however, of his injuring or weakening the body by self-inflicted austerities and tortures, or by fasts and penances, that he might gain occult power. His aim in keeping control over it was that it might be his servant and not his master.

Paul was no ascetic. While he denied the flesh that he might obey the spirit; while he "mortified the flesh, with its affections and desires," that he might attain a higher life,—he did not eschew enjoyment in the proper exercise of the bodily functions. The ascetic rule, "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch" (Col. ii. 22), he condemns as something to which Christian free-men ought not to subject themselves; and over against it he sets the broad principle that sin is found in the heart, and not in the use of external things. He may not always have exercised the liberty which he claimed for others; and we have a suspicion that he was not always as good to himself as he ought to have been; yet his position, that "every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. iv. 4),

is a thoroughly wholesome one. God certainly wants His children to enjoy to the full the good things which He has given them. He grudges them no pleasure that they can get out of them. There is a taint of morbidness in the experience of Augustine, when in his *Confessions* he deplores the fact that his soul was being enmeshed in the love of earthly things, and expresses the fear that he was taking too much pleasure out of such things as fragrant odours, pleasant tastes, and sweet sounds.<sup>1</sup> As if anyone could take too much delight in the things by which the good God is ministering to his happiness. The moral use of bright things needs to be learned equally with the moral use of dark things ; so that creature happiness may be made what it was meant to be—a friend to grace.

It is this morbid fear of taking too much enjoyment out of life that has often driven the mystic into the wildest excesses. Instead of controlling appetite, he has often tried to repress it, with the result that the pent-up waters have broken their frail embankment, and have rushed forth on their work of ruin. Outraged nature takes revenge ; and the refractory body, unable to tempt the soul on the side of its strength, tempts it on the side of its

<sup>1</sup> See Book x., chaps. xxii., xxiii., xxiv.

weakness. One rebound is apt to follow another, and there is often but a step between the tensest self-repression and unbridled licence. One of the saddest chapters in the history of religion is that which deals with the sudden plunges which have been taken from asceticism into animalism. The pillar saint has become a debauchee; the hermit has exchanged his shirt of hair and crust of bread for fine linen and sumptuous fare; the devotee has turned his orisons into bacchanalian songs. Poor weak mortals have got too near the sun, and the wax by which their wings were fastened on, being melted, they have suffered an inglorious fall. Under severe strain artificial religion snaps. Where there has been outward reform without inward regeneration, the sow that was washed returns to her wallowing in the mire. It is only when the sow has been transformed into a sheep that the green pastures are found to be permanently satisfying.

There are two kinds of the Christian life which from the beginning have been frequently set in opposition to one another, namely, the ideals of renunciation and consecration, or of self-denial and self-development. These ideals, instead of being opposed, ought to be united into one.

Christianity demands renunciation. There are



things to be given up, to be forsaken ; things to be renounced. What are they ? Not alone things which are wrong and sinful, but also things which, although allowable and right, hinder the progress of the soul. The choice has often to be made between the rugged steep of self-denial and the easy descent of sinful pleasure. But the mistake of monasticism has to be guarded against, of taking this half of religion for the whole, or there will be developed a maimed, lop-sided, poverty-stricken life, which is a travesty upon the true Christian ideal.

The term "consecration" presents the other and positive side of the Christian life ; and this is fortunately the side upon which the emphasis is being put in the present day. In a full-rounded Christian life renunciation is followed by consecration ; the denial of self by the offering of self ; the giving up of all *for* God by the giving up of all *to* God. It is not by self-limitation and self-repression alone, but also by self-expansion and self-expression, that the true life is reached. Something is crushed out and something is developed ; something laid down, and something taken up. The "leave all" of the Master is joined with His "follow Me." The two taken together make up the sum of Christian duty.

It is interesting to note that what is called

the new pedagogy is giving emphasis to the idea of self-expression as the leading idea in education. And it is doing so with the sense of having made a new discovery. The idea is as old as religion. It is a distinctive note in Christianity that self-denial is worthless unless combined with self-culture. The goal of Christianity is a large, rich life, in which the two ideals of renunciation and consecration are blended into one like the hues of the rainbow.

5. *As a practical mystic Paul kept himself in vital touch with the world and its affairs, while keeping aloof from them in Spirit and aim.*—He established with the world as many helpful relations as possible. He was in the heart of its life ; in the thick of its conflicts. He fought on its great fields of battle ; and as we read his Epistles we can hear the ring of his sword upon the shield of his enemy. His graces were not those of the cloister. Grown in silence, they become strong and firm by battling with the winds of heaven. His interest in men kept his religion from becoming solitary and egoistic. The other-worldliness by which it was characterised was balanced by a this-worldliness. If no man ever lived more above the world, no man ever lived more in the world.

His separation from the world was moral. He walked with wary steps through its muddy

places, keeping his garments unspotted that the consciousness of sin might not separate between him and God. His call to his brethren was, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18). This call to separation from all that was unclean and defiling had a special pertinence to those who had just come out of heathenism, but in its spirit it is applicable to Christians of every age. Evil associations and hurtful entanglements the Christian is to avoid. With "the unfruitful works of darkness" he is to have no fellowship whatsoever.

But instead of living in the world while living above it, the mystic has often withdrawn from it altogether, immuring himself in a cloister or monastery, thus robbing the world of the service of his life. The monastical ideal of a literal withdrawal from the world has found its most persuasive advocate in Thomas à Kempis—who, however, was not, strictly speaking, a mystic, although generally so classed. His *Imitation of Christ* is the fairest flower of monasticism, out of which it grew like a pure lily from the mud at the bottom of a lake. In spite of its self-centred individualism, its morbid introspectiveness, and its substitution of abjectness

for humility, it has been prized and read by succeeding generations, because it is a heart-book, written in the life-blood of an earnest soul ; and because it searches as with an electric light the hidden corners of the human heart.

Quietism marked the mystical extreme which we are now considering. It was characterised by a passionlessness which was generally the result of a reaction from overwrought nerves during a state of ecstasy. Such a noble saint as Madame Guyon shows its harmful tendencies. Her life of trust was beautiful ; but it was united with a habitual self-inspection which paralysed the will, and with an indifference to earth's joys and sorrows which was hardly consistent with a spiritual interpretation of life. The mood of mind to which "all scenes alike engaging prove," is saved from being one of unholy indifference only by union with the Eternal Will. A healthy-minded Christian will enjoy "the harvest of a quiet eye," as he looks upon the good things of life ; he will look without more than he looks within ; instead of withdrawing into himself, as the tortoise into its shell, he will throw himself into things. Retirement from the world, that God may be sought in the silence of the soul, will be to him only an occasional experience. His separation from the world will be a thing of spirit more than of formal deed.

He will learn to find God in the thick of the world's activities just as readily as in places of deep seclusion.

Nowhere is the practical bent of Paul's mysticism more clearly seen than in his appreciation of the outwardness of religion. He lived by the things that flowed out as well as by the things that flowed in. While keeping the heart with all diligence, because out of it were the streams of life, he kept watch of his conduct with all diligence, because in it his inner life was expressed. Well he knew that the surest way to dissipate feeling is to become absorbed in its contemplation, and that the surest way to nourish and strengthen it is to translate it into deeds. The feeling that is not turned to practical account soon evaporates. It was upon this rock that the mysticism of Amiel was split. He had distinct mystical experience, of the value of which he was far from satisfied. Let him describe its nature: "Like a dream which trembles and dies at the first glimmer of dawn, all my past, all my present, dissolve in me, and fall away from my consciousness at the moment when it returns upon itself. I feel myself stripped and empty, like a convalescent who remembers nothing. My travels, my reading, my studies, my projects, my hopes have faded from my mind. It is a singular state.



My faculties drop away from me like a cloak that one takes off, like the chrysalis case of a larva. I behold my own unclothing ; I forget, still more than I am forgotten ; I pass gently into the grave while still living, and I feel as it were the indescribable peace of annihilation, and the divine quiet of Nirvana.”<sup>1</sup> This was the experience of one who dived into his soul and rose unhealed ; one who withdrew from the world instead of trying to improve it ; one who kept gnawing at his heart instead of going out into the world battling like a giant with its living problems. He consumed his own smoke instead of giving the pent-up fires vent in beneficent activities. No wonder his ecstatic experience was unsatisfactory ; and it did not make things better that he had the insight to see the reason for its unsatisfactoriness, and to look upon the pleasure of it as deadly, like the use of opium or hasheesh, “a kind of slow suicide, inferior in all respects to the joys of action, to the sweetness of love, to the beauty of enthusiasm, to the sacred savour of accomplished duty.” The experience of Amiel shows that it is a perilous thing to separate doing from feeling. The emotion that is unexpressed in action dies. The overt act is needed to strengthen the secret feeling.

6. *As a practical mystic Paul valued inward*

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Intime*, pp. 90, 91.



*experiences in proportion as they generated spiritual force.*—He had no morbid craving for ecstasies ; for he knew that in themselves they did not make him better or worse, and that they were of value only as they served to promote ethical ends. This has ever been the mark of the true mystic. His search after God has had behind it an ethical impulse ; his effort to enter into the divine unity has been at bottom an effort to be morally one with God ; he has sought for hidden things, that with them he might enrich his life ; he has gone to spy out the land of promise, that he might bring back clusters of the grapes of Eschol. The words of Paul in 1 Cor. xii. 7, "To each one has been given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal," which have been freely rendered in the *Twentieth Century New Testament*, "Spiritual illumination is in each instance given for some good purpose," show that God has a practical object in view in every experience of the Spirit's presence and power which He gives. And this practical object the true mystic seeks to realise. With him the end of religion does not consist in getting experiences, but in getting more of God into his life through whatever experiences may come to him. Mystical experiences are means, not ends. If they do not serve an ethical purpose they are a snare and a delusion.

If we accept Dr. Moberly's definition of mysticism as "the experience of the Holy Spirit," or "the realisation of the spirit of holiness,"<sup>1</sup> its ethical aim is at once apparent. But, unfortunately, attention has been generally fixed upon its outward forms,—and especially upon its aberrant forms,—and its essential spirit has in consequence been overlooked. Essential mysticism is not something separate and apart from ordinary Christian experience, but is merely a phase of it. It is the interior side of religion. It expresses itself in a constant struggle to free the soul from everything that alienates it from God ; and it is valued just in so far as it purifies motive, quickens love, elevates character, and brings the moral life into oneness with the mind, and heart, and will of God.

7. *As a practical mystic Paul did not substitute the concrete for the abstract, the indefinite for the infinite.*—He valued both the body and the soul of truth.

The prevailing tendency has been to over-value the body of truth. For it is with the body and soul of truth as it is with the body and soul of a man, the body gets the first attention, because it is more tangible and more in evidence than the soul ; yet the body of truth is of value only because of the soul which it contains and

<sup>1</sup> *Atonement and Personality*, p. 312.

by which it is animated. Forms of truth, from which the spirit has fled, are like the clothes from which the child has slipped out into the unseen—precious mementoes of a life that is gone. But there are forms of truth which are like the clothes which cover the living child. They are precious not for uses which they once served, but for uses which they are now serving.

There is in the present day, in some quarters, a strong tendency to undervalue the body of truth. All the concrete forms in which the truth has been expressed and preserved, and by which it is communicated, are treated as of small account. Now to some, visible signs are less necessary than to others, but no one can dispense with them altogether. God is present everywhere, and we do not need the Bible in order to reach Him; but we do need it in order to know Him. Men cry to God as Jacob did to the angel, "I beseech thee, tell me thy name." To know his name is to know his nature. What would we really know of God's nature, if Jesus had not made known His name of "Father"?

Many who dare not cast aside altogether the concrete forms of truth in which God has revealed Himself to His children, treat them in an unfair way. They make the words of Scrip-

ture as a sort of magician's hat, out of which are brought things which fill with astonishment the simple-minded reader. Their fantastic interpretations are justly to be regarded with suspicion. Hidden meanings are got at too great expense when they are got by "handling the word of God deceitfully." No interpretation will stand which does not deal honestly with the actual words of Scripture.

But the search after the spiritual must be sympathised with, for it is the search after reality. Men want to be brought into contact with the eternal verities ; they want to get through the evanescent form to the abiding substance ; they want to get through the loam, and sand, and gravel to the living water that flows beneath. When we go to the bottom of such modern movements as Christian Science and Theosophy, it will be found that they are largely reactions from the sterile teachings of the Church. They have been born of the effort to reach the soul of truth. With doctrinal teaching which builds up its system of truth like a row of bricks, there are many who have no sympathy whatever. Logic fails to convince them. They need the flashing light of intuition, the mystic touch of life upon life, to bring conviction. To the deepest needs of these spiritually-minded children the Church has failed to minister. She has given

them a stone when they have asked for bread ; and with sorrow of heart they have been forced to go elsewhere for the food she has denied them. She has extended her hand to them, but when they have touched it they have found it cold and clammy as the hand of a corpse, and have let it drop, seeking elsewhere the warm friendly hand of a living helper and guide. We may smile as we please at the crude philosophisings of these new cults, but there is a serious side to the matter. The fact that they are outside the Church indicates that there is something lacking in the Church itself. The Church of the Christ who said, " I am the truth " ; that is, the whole truth, the universal truth, is not fulfilling her ministry to the soul if she does not embrace in her teaching what St. Paul calls the *pleroma*, or fulness of truth. Nor is she fulfilling her mission unless she holds the balance between the body and soul of truth, giving to each its proper emphasis, and mediating between the extreme which ignores the concrete, and the extreme which holds that exactness as to outward form is the essential thing. Men cannot always be satisfied with a vague and nebulous philosophy which has usurped the place of religion. They need the concrete, that out of it they may construct at the beginning crutches upon which to lean, and afterwards wings with which to

fly. And the Church will best fulfil her mission to all classes when she unites in one the body and soul of truth ; subordinating the body to the soul ; and leading the thought of men through the outward symbol to the spiritual reality of which it is the temporary expression.



## CHAPTER VII

### HOW PAUL NOURISHED THE MYSTICAL LIFE.

MYSTICAL states are often artificially produced. The whirling dervish and the old-time revivalist—the one on himself, the other on his audience—seek to work up that psychological condition of passivity which some types of mystics regard as indispensable to spiritual impression and receptivity. The Hindoo mystics in their efforts to attain Yoga—the complete union of the human with the Divine—make use of elaborate exercises, including posturings, breathings, and fastings, to develop concentration and self-control. Mystical writers have often prepared manuals recommending exercises by which the distractions of the lower nature may be overcome, and concentration upon spiritual things secured. With Paul there was an utter absence of all such mechanical methods. In the development of the mystical life he eschewed everything that was forced or artificial. He laid down no formal system of spiritual exercises,

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but depended entirely upon the ordinary means of grace. Many of the rules by which he was guided can only be learned inferentially. We feel warranted in saying that he nourished the mystical life in the following ways :

1. *By Prayer.*—He was a man of prayer. Prayer was a working force in his life. He prayed not only at the great crises in his life when emergencies arose which he could not meet, or when pressed down upon his knees by a weight of trouble, but at all times. He enjoins others to be “instant in prayer” (Rom. xii. 13), to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. v. 17); and we are warranted in assuming that he himself lived in habitual communion with God. Not that he was always in the act of prayer, but running through his life was that holy desire for himself and others which constitutes the very breath and essence of prayer. To desire is to pray. And St. Anthony, who places unconscious prayer the highest, says, “We pray as much as we desire, and we desire as much as we love.”

But anyone that has the firm grip upon the divine personality that Paul had, will sooner or later pass over from the prayer of quiet to the prayer which expresses itself in strong crying unto God. It is only when the sense of the divine personality is dim that the lips remain silent. Those who know God’s name will love

to repeat it. A traveller once asked an old Hopi Indian, whom he saw praying for half an hour, as he stood at the door of his house looking over the mesa, what he said when he prayed. He answered—"Nothing." He simply opened his soul to God. Had the Great Spirit been to that Indian a living Person instead of an undefined presence, he would have tried to pray to Him in words. His wordless prayer was not worthless, because it betokened a reverential and receptive attitude of soul; and God is said to "hear *the desire* of the humble" (Ps. xxxvii. 10); but his prayer would have meant more if it had found voice, and had assumed the form of distinct and definite supplication. Paul makes the talking of man with God a mark of conscious sonship. "We received the Spirit of adoption," he says, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). When the heart prays, prayer is real; when heart and mouth pray together, prayer is complete.

If prayer be looked upon at its lowest level, as the means of getting things, we find that in Paul's case it did not always work; but if it be looked upon at its highest level, as the means of getting God into the life, it never miscarried. Subtending every prayer for material benefits was the desire that the material be subordinated to the spiritual, and that the decision as to what

was for the best be left to the All-Wise. Nothing was wanted that did not minister to the soul's good, and promote the growth of "soul wings," so that he might ascend into the secret place of the Most High and gather dynamic force for life's activities. Prayer was practised that the vision might come which lightens the task ; and that the heavens might be opened, that out of them the divine fire might leap upon the altar of the heart to make it ready for the daily sacrifice.

The place of prayer in Paul's life would, however, be inadequately presented, unless to the conception of prayer as a force working upon himself, either reflexively or by the direct action of God, be added the conception of prayer as a social force working good to others. He speaks of himself as "labouring fervently" for others "in prayer" (Col. iv. 12). He had an unshaken conviction that his prayers conveyed help to others, and that he was helped by the prayers of others. Hence the frequent assurance given in his letters that he was praying for those to whom he wrote. Hence, too, his oft-repeated request, "Brethren, pray for us." Into the philosophy of the power of prayer he does not inquire. Whether he considered it a sort of telepathic power given to the praying soul, and going from him to the person prayed for ;

or whether he considered it a power brought into exercise by moving the arm that moves the universe, he does not declare. One thing, however, he makes clear, and that is, that he considered prayer a divinely appointed means for the enlargement of human influence. Carlyle says, "To work is to pray"; Paul would have said, "To pray is to work." From this kind of work no one is shut out. They also serve who only kneel and pray. In Paul's own experience prayer was a form of social service. He felt bound to pray for others. His praying was as free from selfishness as his living. It lifted him up into the universal. He prayed "for all saints" (Eph. vi. 18); "for all men" (1 Tim. ii. 1). His sympathies girdled the globe. The vibrations of his benevolent desire went rippling out to earth's remotest bound. His prayer was as wide in its sweep as the thought and love of God; as high in its reach as the throne of Eternal Power; as deep in its reach as the inmost springs of motive in the heart of man. And nothing brought him into more practical union with God, and steeped his spirit more in divine influences, than praying for those whom God was bent on blessing.

2. *By Meditation.*—Paul, as we have already seen, began his Christian life by retreating into a desert, not for the purpose of staying there,

but to nourish his inner life by meditation and prayer, that he might be better fitted for the work that awaited him in the world. The time spent in solitude, in communion with his own soul and with God, was not lost. By it his newly awakened life was quickly developed, and he became "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus." We are not told of any prolonged seasons of retirement in the busy years that followed, yet we cannot doubt that he snatched many hours for meditation from his crowded life; for how could he have kept giving out if he had not also been taking in? In the present day we need longer and more frequent parentheses for meditation. We live too fast; our religious life has not time to take deep root. We ought more frequently to let go the oar of toil. We ought to find more time to think—more time to consider what lies beneath the surface of things. We ought to cultivate the mystic's habit of looking at the inside of things, that we may live more deeply and more worthily.

Meditation to be profitable must not be day-dreaming, the wandering of mind into space, or blank vacancy of thought. It must be a state of active, earnest thoughtfulness in which the mind is fixed upon the higher side of things. The Eastern mystic sits gazing into vacancy, and his life becomes as vacant as his mind.



Some mystics of a still lower type who sit looking fixedly at the point of their nose, or at their navel, become unspeakably degraded. Meditation to be elevating must be employed upon lofty thoughts. Its objects must also be real ; for the soul can be nourished only by reality. Every attempt to appease its hunger by turning its attention to the picture of a richly-spread table is vain. No better rule has ever been laid down as a guide to meditation than that contained in Paul's words, " Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things " (Phil. iv. 8). These are the things of which account must be taken ; these are the things upon which we are to ruminate ; these are the things which present the lofty ideal which we are to cherish and follow.

Strong effort is needed to concentrate the mind in the hours of meditation, that every thought may be " brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ " (2 Cor. x. 5). A man is not master of himself if he is carried away by every passing thought like a feather caught in the wind. He is master of himself only when under Christ he is master of his thoughts. Every

man should keep his heart with all diligence as a well-guarded garrison. He should scrutinise every thought that comes knocking for admission. To no evil thought, however attractive it may appear, should he give the slightest bit of heart room, but should resolutely bar it out as an intruder and a traitor. Only thoughts which are pure and holy should be welcomed. The heart must ever be pre-empted for goodness; and the example followed of the painter who refused to look at a bad picture lest he might catch some of its imperfections. For be it remembered that thought is generative of deed; and a man's character will always be determined by the habitual trend of his thoughts.

3. *By detachment from outward things.*—This inward detachment or insulation will often be best secured when accompanied by outward separation. But not always. Sometimes the divine call is, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate"; and sometimes it is, Stay among them, and be ye separate. When opportunities for retirement are denied, we must imitate St. Catherine of Siena, who is said to have made "a little interior oratory within her own soul." In the midst of the rush of business and the mad whirl of social life, the soul can retire within itself, and, shutting its noiseless doors, be alone with God. In words of wise

admonition St. Francis de Sales writes, "Remember to make occasional retreats into the solitude of your heart, while outwardly engaged in business or conversation. This mental solitude cannot be prevented by the multitude of those who are about you, for they are not about your heart, but about your body ; so your heart may remain above, in the presence of God alone." Paul, in his strenuous life, must often have left the multitude at the tent door that he might commune with Him who is invisible ; but oftener, when forced to remain in the heart of the world's tumult, he must have curtained off a little corner of his soul in which to commune with the ever-present Father.

When outward separation from the world is sought, care must be taken to avoid the mistake, common to the mystics, into which St. Theresa falls when she says, "It seems our Lord wishes that we should separate ourselves from everything, so as His Majesty may draw nearer to us Himself." Not from "everything," surely ! but from everything sinful ; and from everything not sinful when it would hinder our fellowship with Him.

To let go the world easily we must hold it loosely. Writing in view of the troubled condition of the times, Paul admonishes—"This I say, brethren, the time is shortened that hence-

worth both they that have wives may be as if they had none ; and those that weep, as though they wept not ; and those that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and those that buy, as though they possessed not ; and those that use the world, as not using it to the full : for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 29-31). In these words there is this element of permanent truth—that the things of this world must not be allowed to interfere with the soul's progress. Often the soul is like a ship with sails set and anchor unlifted ; or like a balloon which is inflated with gas, and straining to ascend, but the rope that holds it down to earth is not released. There is some secret attachment that needs to be cut before it can pursue its onward and upward course.

But detachment from earthly things is not enough ; with it must go stronger attachment to heavenly things. The hold upon the things of the world is to be loosened, that the hold upon the things of the spirit realm may be tightened.

"The world is too much with us ; late and soon,  
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers."

We need to get oftener away from it ; and when we enter our closet and shut to the door, we must be on our guard lest we shut it in with us. The rule of the mystics, "Shut the door of the senses and open the inward windows of the soul," is a

good one if only it be widened into, "Shut the door of the senses and open the inward and upward windows of the soul." Let each one say :

"I'll build all inward—not a light shall ope  
The common outway.  
I'll therefore live in dark, and all my light,  
Like ancient temples, let in at the top."

4. *By Silence.*—Paul learned to enter into the secret places of the soul and listen in silence. He did not "lie asleep in nothingness." When speech failed he was mentally alive. His ear was attuned to catch the faintest whisperings of "the still small voice." When the vision tarried he waited for it patiently and silently. With "the peace of God which passeth understanding" enveloping his soul, he lay quiet and still as a babe upon his mother's breast. His peace was not only "*with* God," it was *in* God. Abiding in God's great peace, the divine image was reflected in his heart as the clouds are reflected upon the unruffled surface of the lake.

It is in this attitude of patient, silent waiting that the mystic vision comes. The early Quakers waited in silence "on the springing of the life"—the breaking forth of the fountain of inspiration in their hearts; nor did they wait in vain. We are enjoined to "be silent to the Lord"

(Ps. xxxvii. 7); to be still before Him; not polluting the air with our complaints; and instead of always speaking to Him, allowing Him sometimes to speak to us. Dumbness will quicken hearing. It will also lead to that condition of soul in which the moulding power of God is operative. Luther's translation of the text just quoted is, "Be silent unto the Lord, and let Him mould you." In the silence great thoughts are bred. The dews distil from quiet skies. "Silence is the mother of truth." When the babblement of the world has been excluded, the bandage of sense falls from the eyes, and things appear in their naked reality. By the man who dwells in the divine stillness things are seen which from other eyes are hid, and things are heard which are to other ears inaudible.

In "The Three Silences" of Molinos, translated by Longfellow, the element of passivity which enters into silence is brought into view:

"Three silences there are; the first of speech,  
The second of desire, the third of thought."

When the highest silence is reached, man has ceased to "commune with his own heart"; he has closed his ear to all self-suggestion whatsoever, and has turned it heavenward, saying, "Speak, Lord: for Thy servant heareth." He hears God's voice distinctly, because he has



ceased to listen to his own. Within the secret "oratory" in his soul God alone is heard to speak. Does not this explain why many fail to hear the voice of God speaking within them? They are too much occupied listening to the voices of earth to hear the voice that speaketh from heaven. "We must lend an attentive ear," says Fenelon, "for God's voice is soft and still, and is only heard by those who hear nothing else. Ah, how rare it is to find a soul still enough to hear God speak!"

5. *By concentrating the mind upon heavenly things.*—There is everywhere manifest in Paul's experience a certain wistfulness towards the unseen and the eternal. His heart went out to God in ardent desire. He panted for Him as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. He practised the upward look, "the methodical elevation of the soul towards God" of which the mystics make so much. He hungered and thirsted after the things of the Spirit. He sought passionately and persistently "the things which are above." His mind and heart were fixed on what lay within the veil.

The vision of truth comes to those who long for it and centre their thought upon it as Paul did. Openings come to those who wait for them. The veil of sense grows transparent to those who keep looking at it with eager eyes. Wings

are sprouted by heavenly desire. As the *stigmata*, or marks of the crucifixion of Jesus, are said to have appeared upon the bodies of those who absorbingly mused upon His passion, the marks of His heavenly life appear upon the hearts of those who muse upon His glory. The soul takes on something of what it steadfastly looks at. It also sees what it steadfastly looks for. To those who love His appearing, and yearn for it, the presence of the Lord is manifested ; while to those who harden their hearts against Him the revelation of His presence is dark and impenetrable. The light of truth resembles in its effects the morning sun, which sends the owls hooting into seclusion, and awakens the songsters in the grove. Every revelation of truth is a pillar of fire to those who are on the right side of it, and a pillar of cloud to those who are on the wrong side of it. What a man sees depends upon his spiritual attitude and the intensity of his heart's desire, more than upon the strength of his intellectual powers. The broken-hearted man who looks longingly and constantly to heaven, exclaiming, " Would God that I were there," is the one to whose far-seeing eyes its golden gates appear. The man who panteth after the living God is the one to whom God's satisfying presence is made known. The man who waits and watches for the beatific vision

is the one to whom it is given. The palace doors of the King are never opened at the first knock. To the proto-martyr Stephen, heaven was opened in response to his steadfast gaze. It is "the little more" of concentrated and persistent effort that brings the blessing.

6. *By the cultivation of inward purity.*—Sin darkens the windows of the soul. To the carnal mind the divine mysteries are veiled. "Into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter, nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin." "The sun of truth," says John Smith, the English Platonist, "never shines into unpurged souls." The eyes that are washed clean by the tears of repentance begin to see a new light. To those who grow in holiness that light "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The prime condition for seeing the spiritual is spiritual-mindedness. The city of God, like the fabled temple of Sangrael, is visible only to the eyes of the pure. The first condition for entering into the mystical union has always been held to be the purging of the heart from all that is not God. This condition is laid down by Paul when he exhorts us to "cleanse ourselves from defilement of flesh and spirit" (2 Cor. vii. 1). Outward and inward purity he deemed essential to our coming into the secret place of divine knowledge and fellowship.

The mystics have taught that there are three distinct stages in the soul's upward progress by which it is freed from the obscurations caused by the dominance of the lower nature. These they designate the purgative life, the illuminative life, and the unitive life. Through these stages the soul must pass before it can reach the sunlit heights where it can behold the open vision of the divine glory. These three stages are thus described in *Theologia Germanica*: "The purification concerneth those who are beginning or repenting, and is brought to pass in a three-fold wise; by contrition and sorrow for sin, by full confession, by hearty amendment. The enlightening belongeth to such as are growing, and also taketh place in three ways—to wit, by the eschewal of sin, by the practice of virtue and good works, and by the willing endurance of all manner of temptations and trials. The union belongeth to such as are perfect, and also is brought to pass in three ways—to wit, by pureness and singleness of heart, by love, and by the contemplation of God, the Creator of all things" (chap. xiv.). Here we discover the worm which has too often lain in the heart of mysticism, namely, the idea of purification as something which comes at the beginning of the Christian life, and is to be left behind as the soul rises to higher levels of experience. Not

so does Paul teach. He never represents the soul as rising above the need of purification by attaining a whiteness that sin cannot stain. Those who have been made every whit clean in the bath of regeneration, need frequently to wash from their feet the pollutions of earth. They need to be progressively purified. Their purification is not something accomplished once for all. It is often attained through much struggle and pain. The discipline of suffering and sorrow has often to be sent to purify the heart and clarify the vision. The presence of the Son of God is seen from the midst of the burning fiery furnace. From the darkness of the deep valley stars are seen, which were not visible in the glare of the sun on the mountain top. Inward illumination is a costly thing:

“By the cross road and none other  
Is the mount of vision seen.”

Every step towards the highest is taken with bleeding feet. Every re-birth of the soul is accomplished by travail pangs. As Browning has said, “When pain ends, gain ends too.”

7. *By Self-surrender.*—The surrender of Paul to his divine Lord when He appeared to him in the way, was the initial act in what became a life-long surrender. Before the invisible presence of the living Christ he ever bowed, confessing His Lordship, and giving to Him undisputed

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sway over his entire life. His surrender was definite and irreversible from the first, and became more complete as the years passed. Out of it came all his enlarging experiences of the Christian life.

Without this surrender of self—this renunciation of personal aims and desires, this sinking of the will in the will of God, there can be no experience of the deeper things of religion. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. From the soul that is pressing inward to the inmost place in God's temple a larger sacrifice is demanded at each succeeding gate. This is the reason why souls are halted in their quest. They are unwilling to pay the price. They are willing enough to pay something, but they are not prepared to pay the uttermost farthing. "God's desire," says Madame Guyon,—of whom Dr. Moule speaks as "the saintly and suffering apostleless of self-surrender,"—"is to give Himself unto His creatures, according to the capacity which He hath placed in them; and yet, alas! men are afraid to surrender themselves to God; they are afraid to possess Him, and to dispose themselves for the Divine union."

For many there is no harder thing than to "dispose themselves," or set themselves in order, that they may possess God and be possessed by Him. The first and greatest struggle that



God has with His children is to get them to give up their wills to His. Until that is done there can be no development of character. Those who would experience the fulness of His enlightening and renewing presence are required to yield to Him in everything, and put out of the way all that would hinder His working in them. It is the surrendered soul that He occupies ; it is the emptied soul that He fills ; it is the plastic soul that He stamps with His image. The words of Paul, "Yield yourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead," express an essential condition of divine occupancy. The same idea is brought out in another form in Rom. xii. 1, 2, which form the nexus between the doctrinal and practical parts of Paul's Epistle. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, well-pleasing unto God, which is your spiritual worship. And be not fashioned according to this age : but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Those who have made the great surrender of self in its totality are here enjoined to seek for inward renewal, in order that they may prove, in an experimental way, what the will of God really is, and know the blessedness of living in obedience to it. The

knowledge of God's will, which is the ultimate object of human quest, is promised, not on the ground of intellectual attainment, but on the ground of the possession of submissive and obedient hearts.

When the soul is fully surrendered to God, a point is reached at which all struggling ceases, and the movement of God is waited for. The poet Wordsworth, to whom was given the mystic's flashing intuition, not only makes passivity of soul a necessary condition of receiving divine communications, but holds that the divine message may come when it is not being definitely sought :

"Think you 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come  
But we must still be seeking ?  
Nor less I deem that there are powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress,  
And we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness."

The contention is true ; and yet the application outruns the argument ; for the wise passivity in which the mind feeds itself is hardly passivity at all. It is certainly not the passivity of absolute quietude. It is presumably a condition in which the soul remains sensitive to spiritual impressions, welcomes divine communications when they come, and answers the divine voice when it speaks. That is indeed " a wise passiveness."

And it is the only kind of passiveness which, within the religious sphere of things, possesses any value. It implies that the soul is keeping open door for God, and is consciously giving itself up to Him, that He may work within it the good pleasure of His will.

8. *By appropriating the Divine.*—Receptivity must cease to be passive and become active. To be “strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might” (Eph. vi. 10), the soul must not merely follow God with open face, as the sun-flower follows the sun ; or stand under the shower of His heavenly grace soaking it in at every pore : it must consciously reach out after Him ; take Him into itself ; inbreathe His spirit ; drink from the fountain of His power, and feed upon the bread of His eternal love. The duty of this active receptiveness is suggested by the imperative form of the words, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. v. 18). The fulness of the Spirit is attainable by all, being dependent upon the fulness of faith. What anyone has is never the measure of the Spirit’s power, for His power is infinite,—it is merely the measure of his own limited faith. The Spirit’s inflowing stops only when faith stops. “According to your faith be it unto you,” is the law which determines the measure in which any man receives the divine.

Perhaps nowhere is the act of spiritual appropriation more graphically set forth by Paul than in his mystical utterance, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. xiii. 14). To put on Christ means something more than to slavishly imitate His outward life; it means to appropriate His spirit; to wrap it about oneself as a garment; to clothe oneself with it from head to foot; to cover oneself with it so completely that self may be hidden and Christ alone be seen. When self is thus displaced by Christ, "the orison of union" is reached, in which, according to St. Teresa, "the soul is fully awake as regards God, and wholly asleep as regards things of this world and in respect to herself."

By the affirmation and reaffirmation of the truths by which the spirit lives, the act of appropriating faith is strengthened. Faith should lay her hand upon a thing, and keep saying, "This is mine," until the sense of self-possession grows clear and strong. It is in this way that we are to understand Paul's words, "Reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vii. 11). That is, count the old sinful, wilful, selfish, self-loving, self-seeking nature as dead, even if you feel it stirring within you. Keep on repeating its death sentence; do not accord to it the claims of the living; pay no attention what-

ever to its solicitations ; but, on the other hand, count your higher nature as alive through the quickening power of Christ, even if no motion of life be felt ; if the ground above be frozen, keep on declaring that there is life in the roots ; anticipate in winter the coming of spring ; expect to see the divine life within you cut through the clods, and grow towards God ; look forward confidently to a time of flowering and fruiting.

But faith is never entirely anticipatory. It experiences in part the things it hopes for. It enjoys earnestness of the coming inheritance. It dips its cup into an infinite ocean, and drinks according to its capacity to receive. Yet what does the largest faith appropriate in proportion to the boundless resources at its command ? It has not to go far before losing itself in the illimitable.

9. *By cultivating dependence upon the Divine.*—No man ever denuded himself more completely of self-sufficiency than Paul. He reached that condition described by Jacob Boehme, in which the soul saith, “ *I have nothing*, for I am utterly stripped and naked ; *I can do nothing*, for I have no manner of power, but am as water poured out ; *I am nothing*, for all that I am is no more than an image of Being, and only God is to me I AM ; and so sitting down in my own nothingness, I give glory to the eternal Being, and will nothing of myself, that so God may be all in me,

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being unto me my God and all things." "I know," says Paul, "that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. vii. 18). All that was good in him was what he had "received of God" (1 Cor. iv. 7). In God were the springs of his moral life. In himself were weakness and sin. In God were strength and holiness. Congruous with his teaching is the saying of Cardinal Manning, "Wherever you behold a good thing, there you see the working of the Holy Ghost."

He found in God the ground of the inner life. In a remarkable passage he speaks of God, after a mystical fashion, as in and behind all our mental processes. "Not that we are sufficient as of ourselves to think any thing of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. iii. 5). That is, our sufficiency to think rightly is of God. God works upon our intellects as truly as He works upon our hearts and wills. He gives power to think as well as to love and act. There is something which comes from Him welling up into our minds, pressing its way through the multitude of our thoughts, giving direction and form to all our thinking, just in proportion as we yield to it. It has been the folly of the Church that she has separated God from the intellect, failing to see that He has as much to do with it as with any other part of man's spiritual nature. She has characterised the religion of the intellect



as cold, and the religion of the heart as warm ; failing to see that coldness or warmth is in either case the result of the absence or presence of God. A divinely moved intellect is warm ; a heart from which God is shut out is cold.

Paul also found in God the strength he needed to meet all the demands of the Christian life. When oppressed with weakness, or when weighted down with onerous duties, he found beneath him a sustaining, enabling power. Mark his declaration, " I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me " (Phil. iv. 13) ; not all things absolutely, but all things within the sphere of personal obligation. And again, " By the grace of God I am what I am : and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not void ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me " (1 Cor. xv. 10). God's grace stood in his thought for the sum-total of the gracious influences by which he was inspired and empowered. Piling up one qualifying phrase upon another to show the adequacy of divine grace unto the ends for which it is given, he says, " God is able to make all grace abound unto you ; that ye having always all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work " (2 Cor. ix. 8). To his own fainting heart was given the comforting assurance, " My grace is sufficient for thee : for My strength is made

perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. xii. 9). And so completely was he emptied of self, so thoroughly had he learned the lesson of dependence, that he adds, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my weaknesses that the strength of Christ may rest upon me"; literally, that it may "cover" me, or "spread a tabernacle over me." Tabernacled in divine strength; what a mystical flight of fancy! And yet how precious the truth which that figure conveys!

10. *By co-operating with the Divine.*—The necessity for uniting self-activity with the movement of God within the soul is brought strikingly out in the words of Paul: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 12, 13). His argument is, that because God is at work at the centre of being, touching the springs of motive, arousing and energising the moral nature, personal effort is to be intensified rather than slackened. Man is not to do less but more to work out his own salvation, seeing that God is working in him and with him to the same end, reinforcing his feeble effort so as to render failure impossible. He is not to work, as he has sometimes been told to do, as if everything depended upon himself. For it does not. More depends upon his divine Ally than upon himself; and in the

final result it is what his divine Ally does that tells. Everyone who is trying to carve his character into the image of Christ has a power behind him guiding his bungling fingers, and so much of God enters into the finished product that Paul describes it as "His workmanship" (Eph. ii. 10). Yet in its own place man's part is just as important as God's ; and since it is the only part that is ever left undone, the pertinency of Paul's exhortation is obvious.

What God does *in* us has for its end something He wants to do *by* us. He works in us, strengthening us "with power through His Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. iii. 10), to make us "perfect in every good work to do His will" (Heb. xiii. 21). He imparts to us His own holy energy that we may do His works. It is our glory that we can be His "co-workers" ; "labouring together with Him" for the accomplishment of a common end. This union in action is possible because of oneness of nature ; it becomes actual only when there is oneness of aim. For how can two work together unless they be agreed ? Upon man's co-operation God waits, there being many things which He cannot do without him. The influence which He exerts upon him to bring him into partnership with Him, is moral and suasive ; for men are not His blind instruments, but His free and intelligent

agents. Whenever anyone responds to His call to service, He works with him, and blesses his labours. Paul's declaration, " I planted, Apollos watered, and God gave the increase " (1 Cor. iii. 6), expresses the undeviating principle of divine co-operation. The response of God to man's feeblest effort is never problematical. His increase always follows the planting and watering.

So thoroughly does the divine blend into the human, that no line of demarcation can be drawn between them. Their joint action is as the work of one. And so completely does God conceal His movements, that although He is always working with us, He appears to have gone into a far country, leaving us to work out the problem of our life alone. The human actor often appears to be the only one at work. God is content to be the silent partner. He is more anxious to be used than to be praised. He makes Himself so widely available that there need be no sense of separation from Him in any of the lawful activities of life. To such a high plane of copartnership with Him is it possible to rise, that the deeds which seem most our own may be the very deeds in which He most fully realises Himself ; so that when we are most conscious of living our own lives, Christ may be most fully living Himself over again in us. This was no

doubt Paul's experience when he exclaimed, "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21).

Out of this sense of union with God in action—which is a side of the mystical union that many mystics have overlooked—the noblest and most useful lives have been born. Indeed, man rises in the scale of being just in proportion as he realises this practical union. What an immeasurable distance lies between Browning's Caliban as he sprawls in the mud at the door of his cave, dimly dreaming of "the quiet above" which is impotent to help, and a Christian man like Paul, to whom God is a living power within the soul; a power which he can reach, and to which he can unite himself in all his upward struggles, and in all his efforts to make his life productive of good to others. It is when the practical union is fully entered upon, and man gets close to God and becomes bound up with Him in the working out of His eternal purposes, that he attains his highest destiny.<sup>1</sup>

II. *By embodying the Divine in action.*—Action

<sup>1</sup> One is surprised to find how completely R. A. Vaughan, in his *Hours with the Mystics*, ignores the element of divine activity in mystical experience. He even goes the length of defining mysticism as "that form of error which mistakes for a divine manifestation the operation of a merely human faculty." The best he can say of it is that it is "an exaggeration of that aspect of Christianity which is presented to us by St. John" (Vol. I. p. 21). If he had left out the word "exaggeration" and had simply said that Christian Mysticism is that form of Christianity presented to us by St. John,—and by St. Paul,—he would have exactly covered the case.



brings enlightenment. In the spiritual as well as in the natural world light is a mode of motion. The soul, like the firefly, glows when on the wing. Those who do Christ's will understand His doctrine. Those who use the truth they have, get more. "Progressive obedience," says Dr. Illingworth, "reacts upon the intellect, and brings progressive insight—insight into the reality of the spiritual life, insight into the power of prayer, insight into the truth of the Christian revelation ; and consequent conviction, that as Christians we are in union with God." <sup>1</sup> As the altruistic spirit grows by the practice of altruistic deeds, so mystical experience grows by translating it into action. If ethically neutral, it fades away and perishes. That Paul's outward labours in the cause of Christ enriched his inner life, we cannot doubt. When out on the path of service, his unseen Lord walked with him, refreshing and strengthening his heart. His experience must often have been similar to that of the old monk who was granted a vision of the glorified Saviour. As he sat in rapt adoration, he heard the convent bell calling him to go and minister to the poor who had gathered at the gate. Without a moment's hesitation he obeyed the summons to duty. When he returned to his cell the vision was still there ; and from its lips came the words,

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Character*, p. 171.



“Hadst thou stayed I must have gone.” It is sometimes forgotten that the Master’s promise, “Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the consummation of the age” (Matt. xxviii. 20), is connected with the commission, “Go and make disciples of all the nations.” It is to those who obey the call, and not to those who remain behind in idleness, cloying their spiritual appetites with the sweets of religion, that the promise of the Master’s abiding presence is given. To them He is inwardly and intimately nigh.

Unless oxygenised by vigorous exercise, the inner life will become atrophied. In no other way can it be healthfully developed than by engaging in some form of profitable work. The exhortation of Paul to Timothy, “Stir up the gift that is in thee” (2 Tim. i. 6), implies this; for the context shows that Timothy was to stir up the smouldering embers of the divine life within him, not by some process of self-excitation, but by attending to certain definite duties from the performance of which he was shrinking back. He was naturally reserved and timid, and lacking in courage. He was in danger of becoming morbidly introspective and self-conscious, and so to restore the balance he was exhorted to force himself out into the field of action, to do unpleasant things; to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. In this way the divine

gift which was in him, as part of his inner self, would renew its life, as a banked fire that has been stirred up, so as to give it air and ventilation, will burn in a clear and steady flame.

If Paul's own life of intimate fellowship with God and ceaseless activity in the service of man has any lesson to teach, it is that the life within, the life divinely communicated, is fed by the bread of honest toil ; that chrismatic gifts increase as they are used ; that the emptying of self in the service of humanity is a necessary condition to the obtaining of larger infillings of the Spirit of power. Paul accepted life as it came ; finding in every event a means of grace and an opportunity for service. Never did he seek to be freed from the burden of duty, much less from the burden of being. All he sought was strength to bear his burden to the end. Inspired by what he saw in the unseen world around and within him, he toiled bravely on until his task was done, and he entered the heavenly city, in the light of which he had ever walked.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MESSAGE OF PAUL THE MYSTIC TO THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY.

IN using the expression "according to *my* gospel," Paul felt that he had a message to give which was peculiarly his own, minted in his own mind, and stamped with his own individuality. It was a message which expressed what he had come to know and experience of Christ and of His religion. The fundamental facts which lay at the heart of it being historical, were fixed and unchangeable; but the message itself took shape from his own personality, as water takes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured. What Paul gives us is not a bare record of outward fact, but an interpretation of outward fact in the light of personal experience. The personal equation which enters into his message, and which makes it unlike any other, is that which gives to it its special value. It does not contain the whole truth, but it gives a distinct note, which is needed to make up the symphony of truth.

The most personal and distinctive thing in Paul's message is undoubtedly the mystical element which underlies his juridical doctrine of justification by faith. Nor is this grafted on to it, but grows naturally out of it, inasmuch as the relationships involved in the soul's adjustment are spiritual and personal.

Breaking up Paul's mystical message into its component parts, we find that it includes the following declarations :

1. *That the formative thing in Christian experience is the personal contact of the soul of man with the living Redeemer.*—In that supreme moment when Christ was revealed to him, and entered with saving power into his life, the mystical message of Paul was born. The mystical, transcendental Christ was henceforth the only Christ he knew, the only Christ he sought to make known to others. The human Christ he had not known, except by hearsay ; nevertheless, as Wernle says, " it was he who best understood him." He did not belong to the favoured circle of disciples among whom the Lord went in and out. Upon the blessed face of the Master he had never looked, the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth he had not heard. He knew Him as we must know Him if we know Him at all, in the reality and power of His spiritual presence.

It is noteworthy that Paul makes hardly a reference to the earthly life of our Lord. The only exceptions are when he refers to His birth, death, and resurrection, and those he makes for purely doctrinal purposes ; yet he must have been familiar with the events of that life, especially if the Gospel of his pupil Luke was written, as is generally believed, under his influence and direction. But so absorbed was he in the glory of the risen Christ, whom he had seen and heard, that he declared, " Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet we know Him so no more " (2 Cor. v. 16). With something of impatience he answers the boast of those who gloried in the fact that they had been acquainted with Christ in the flesh, saying in effect, " That is now behind you ; it belongs to a past condition of things : you can no more live upon it than your forefathers in the desert could live upon the manna of the day before ; you can know Christ in that way no longer ; you can know Him now not as the Man of Galilee, but as the living Christ who holds personal contact with your souls." It is in that way that the world must know Christ to-day.

Since the time of Paul down to the present, the testimony of the Church to the presence of the living Christ has been continuous and cumulative. It has been the bridge which has

connected the past with the present. The Church has lived because He has lived within her. Throughout the centuries she has toiled, and suffered, and triumphed, because of the unshaken assurance that her heavenly Bridegroom has not forsaken her. She has looked upon her indwelling Lord as her actual ruler and leader, the source of her illumination and strength. Her power has waxed or waned in proportion as this assurance has been bright or dim. Every revival in the Church has been a revival of the sense of the Master's presence.

During recent years the historical method of New Testament study has been somewhat closely followed, with the result that the evidential value of the experience of the living Christ has been in a measure obscured. The historical method sends us back to the first century to find our Christ. It puts Him more than nineteen hundred years away. It does not give us a Christ who is alive to-day. It sends us to seek the living among the dead. All that the Gospel story can give us is the evidence of the Christ who was. To find evidence of the Christ who is, we must look elsewhere. That evidence is found in the working of His Spirit in our hearts. That Christ is here, that He has not left His people in a state of orphanage, that He has fulfilled His promise made at the



time of His departure, "I will not leave you desolate, I will come unto you," is a matter of present experience. "Serious, sober-minded men may still be found the whole world over, who say that they are conscious of this presence as a fact; while as the result of this power and presence the same things are being done and suffered in the Apostolic and every after age."<sup>1</sup> The supreme proof that Christ is alive is that He is living with us and in us. Ever since He left this earth His people have been able to give confirmation to the words, "Whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. i. 8).

Whereunto then serveth the historical record of the Christ who once lived on this earth? We answer, it explains who and what the Christ is who now lives among us. It makes known to us His true character, setting it before us as the perfect model for our imitation. Indeed, it gives us all the certain knowledge which we possess of what He really is. We need, therefore, to go back continually to the historical record to gain fresh knowledge of the Life of Lives, that we may carry over from it all the ethical qualities and ideals which it contains and transfer them to the Christ whom we now know, with

<sup>1</sup> *Personality Human and Divine*, J. R. Illingworth, p. 198.

Paul, after the spirit. We need to become acquainted with the Man of Nazareth, who blessed little children, fellowshiped with social outcasts, healed the sick, fed the hungry, comforted the distressed, died for the ungodly, that in Him we may see the kind of Christ who is with us to-day—the Christ in whom we are to trust, and in whose footsteps we are unfalteringly to follow. We shall thus be saved from the mistake of M. Loisy, who draws a contrast between the Christ of history—"a figure purely human and unmiraculous," and the Christ of faith—"risen, glorified, divine." Both Christs being one, the one is no less divine than the other.

When Phillips Brooks first spoke to Helen Keller of Christ, she at once exclaimed, "Oh, I never knew His name before, but I always knew *Him*." She was acquainted with Him as the Christ of experience, the Universal Christ who lighteneth every man coming into the world; but she did not know Him as the Christ of history, the Christ who lived a human life in Palestine long years ago. Alas! there are many who know Him as the Christ of history who do not know Him as the Christ of experience. They know His name, but they do not know *Him*. They are familiar with the facts of His earthly life, they accept His system of teaching, they follow Him as

an impersonal and abstract ideal, but they have not experienced the dynamic power of His living personality. They know Him as the Christ who came, but they do not know Him as the Christ who is here. The complete knowledge of Christ is possessed by those alone to whom the Christ of history has become the Christ of experience.

We are indebted to Paul for making known to us the spiritual Christ, the Christ of experience, the Christ of to-day; yet it must be acknowledged that his failure to turn back to the Christ of history and linger lovingly over the details of His life, so as to understand Him as the Christ of experience, has made His testimony one-sided, and has rendered it comparatively valueless to those to whom the natural way of reaching the divine Christ is through His human life. It may have been one of the results of his making so little of Christ's earthly life, that some of those who came after him went to the extreme of denying the humanity of Christ altogether, so that the Apostle John had to set himself against their error by declaring that whosoever denied that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. In the present day the tendency in the opposite direction has often been so strong, that there may be need to declare that whosoever denieth that Jesus Christ is come in the spirit, is not of the household of faith.

The Church of to-day needs Paul's mystical message that she gain a revived consciousness of the presence of her Lord. She needs to realise that the same Jesus of whom we read in the Gospels, the same Jesus whom the disciples saw going up into heaven, has returned in another form, and is now in her midst ; the unseen host at every sacramental supper ; the unseen guest at every common meal. This truth is the life-blood of her faith. This truth, and not the doctrine of justification by faith, is the article of a standing or a falling Church. Take away from the Church the conviction of the presence of a living, working, and abiding Christ, and you tear the very heart out of her religious life.

The world, too, needs Paul's mystical message to give it a new sense of the reality of Christ, a vivid realisation of His actual presence. It is not enough to know that He once lived on earth, what men want to know is that He now lives, and that His saving help is now available. Important as it is to know what He has done for them, it is still more important to know what He can now do for them. In the story of his life, Mr. S. H. Hadley, the well-known mission worker of New York, tells us how the sense of a Christ who was present to help first came to him. He says, " I was sitting one day in a saloon, a hopeless drunkard, when I seemed to feel some great

and mighty presence. I did not know then what it was. I did afterwards learn that it was Jesus the sinner's friend." He made his way to Jerry M'Auley's Mission, where, after listening to the testimonies of others to the saving power of Christ, he prayed, "Dear Jesus, can you save me?" The sense of deliverance was immediate. Then he adds, "Never with mortal tongue can I describe that moment. Although up to that moment my soul had been filled with unutterable gloom, I felt the glorious brightness of the noon-day sun shine into my heart. I felt I was a free man. Oh, the precious feeling of safety, of freedom, of resting on Jesus! I felt that Christ with all His brightness and power had come into my life; that, indeed, old things had passed away, and all things had become new." This is the Saviour that sinful men, the world over, need; a Saviour who is within reach; a Saviour who lives, and loves, and saves; a Saviour who is not merely "the incomparable man" whose memory is fondly cherished, but a divine and living Saviour to whose Almighty hand struggling, sinking souls may cling, and be lifted up out of the mire of moral pollution, and have their feet set upon the rock of eternal righteousness. This is the Saviour whom Paul the Mystic has given to the world.

2. *That the essential thing in religion is not*

*its outward form, but its inward spirit.*—From beginning to end the teaching of Paul was opposed to the religion of form. It was decidedly anti-ritualistic. Paul never ceased to thunder against the religionists of his day, who put stress upon the puerilities of piety. So little value did he put upon rules and ceremonies, that he seems at times to disparage the externals of religion. “Weak and beggarly elements” he calls them (see Gal. iv. 9–11). At best they were crutches for the lame, to be thrown away when the vivifying power of Christ had been experienced. Dependence upon them, on the part of a Christian, was a return to legalism. To assign saving efficacy to them was to fall from grace.

On the other hand, Paul put emphasis upon the religion of the spirit. In his contention with his Judaizing opponents his battle-ground was that of the spirit *versus* the letter. He stood for the spiritual interpretation of Christianity. The keynote of his ministry is contained in the words, “Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Gal. vi. 15). All his interest centred in the vital things of religion; and he never wearied of warning against the danger of making the performance of prescribed ceremonials the test of discipleship, instead of the transformation of the heart and



life through faith in Jesus Christ. Rites and ceremonies were to him the mere costume of religion. Their value lay in their spiritual significance. The material emblems of the Lord's Supper spoke to him of a mystic bread and wine with which the soul was fed. He saw beneath the circumcision which was "outward in the flesh," a "circumcision made without hands" (Col. ii. 11); a circumcision "of the heart in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of man but of God" (Rom. ii. 29). There was nothing he dreaded more than seeing his converts "subject themselves to ordinances" (Col. ii. 20); thus bringing themselves under the heavy yoke of ceremonialism from which they had been delivered. He repudiated the idea that Christianity is an ironclad system of rules; and declared, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17). Forms he used just so far as they were of use; but he did not tie himself down to them. He was freed from their slavery. He exercised his common sense in adapting them to existing conditions, breaking, if need be, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" in the letter, that he might keep it in the spirit.

Mysticism has always come in as a rebound from formalism in religion. The use of set forms tends to formality; ritualism has a way

of becoming mechanical ; the strict observance of the letter is apt to strangle the life of the spirit. This tendency to externality, which is especially strong in the Western mind, will, if allowed free course, develop into a religion which consists in something lying outside of experience, something to be studied as you might study botany or astronomy. To this tendency mysticism furnishes an antidote, by appealing from form to life. In times of barrenness it exerts a freshening force, by bringing the Church back to what is vital in religion. Professor Stearns says, "In every age when the life of the Church grows weak, and its inner fires die down, mysticism is needed. Christians must be made to realise that the hidden life of faith and communion with God is their true life." The watch-cry, "Back to Christ," may therefore be changed into "Back to experience"; for it is out of contact with Christ that Christian experience springs. To this original experience the mystic has always been calling upon the Church to return, even at the expense of forsaking everything external. The testimony which he has lifted in the face of prevailing formalism has been well expressed by Carlyle in his essay on George Fox: "First must the dead letter of religion own itself dead, and drop piecemeal into dust, if the living spirit of religion, freed

from its charnel-house, is to rise on us newborn of heaven, with healing under its wings."

The only exception to the revolt of mysticism against ritualism has been in the case of the Roman Catholic mystic who has donned sacerdotal garments, and has hunted with the hounds of mysticism while running with the hare of sacerdotalism. His sacerdotalism has been an excrescence, a contradiction, something that fettered his free spirit, and hindered the inner life from finding full expression. He has generally been a mystic in bonds. Spiritual freedom is a hard thing to gain, and a still harder thing to keep. Ritualism is religion made easy. External religion is the wide door by which the multitudes enter the Church. The loftier our ideals the fewer the converts. Yet there is the divinest wisdom in enthroning the spiritual,—for that way ultimate triumph lies. Many have grown weary of the fractional religion of legalism, and are hungering for the larger religion of the spirit; they are seeking to get behind outward forms to the vital force which gave them birth. And if the pulpit of to-day would retain its ancient power, it must learn from Paul the Mystic how to minister to this important class, and lead them out of the house of bondage into the liberty and joy of the children of God.

3. *That the distinguishing thing in the Christian*

*religion is the possession of a spiritual principle or power, from which all goodness flows.*—The tree is made good that the fruit may be good. In some mysterious way a heavenly influence touches the spirit of men, arousing it out of its torpor, and making it alive to the things of the kingdom of God. This life-giving power Paul ascribes to Christ, as in the words, “You hath He quickened who were dead through your trespasses and sins” (Eph. ii. 1). Whether he conceives of this power as vital or dynamical, he always speaks of it as divine. He represents it as “the power of God” acting upon the soul, uniting itself with it, and so reinforcing it that there is victory over sin, and the attainment of righteousness. For the possession of this power he urges all men to strive; inasmuch as without it they must remain morally impotent. He shows that the way to possess it is through faith—faith being the means of connection between Christ and man, the opening of the heart to the experience of the saving power of his instreaming life. It is through faith that the uncounted riches of Christ are transferred to us, and that unto us He is “made wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. i. 30).

Paul shows still further that the regenerating power which is in Christ for sinful men is mediated

by the Holy Spirit ; that the Holy Spirit not only takes the things of Christ and shows them unto men, but that He also takes the things of Christ and ministers them unto men. He is the unseen agent by whom Christ, who is no longer visible in the flesh, is made real to human consciousness and effective to human salvation. It is His work at once to reveal Christ to the spirit of man as the source of spiritual life, and to effect a connection between the Christ and the spirit of man that his life may be communicated. To His co-operation Paul attributed all his success in the work of preaching the gospel. He reminds the Thessalonians that behind his spoken message was the unseen power that brought it home. " Our gospel," he said, " came unto you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance (1 Ep. i. 5). So necessary did he esteem the inward tuition of the Holy Spirit to a true understanding of Christ, that he declares that " no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Spirit " (Rom. ix. 1). Before the Jerusalem council he testified that when the Gentiles received the word of the gospel from his mouth, God gave unto them the Holy Spirit (Acts xv. 7, 8). For the coming of the Holy Spirit Paul never prayed ; he believed in His continual presence, and counted upon His constant co-operation.



We must remember that Paul's ministry was begun shortly after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The mighty movement of spiritual power into which he had come was still at flood-tide. Nor did it quickly exhaust itself. Paul enjoyed a perpetual Pentecost. Wherever he went "the Holy Spirit fell upon those who heard the word," and souls were saved and churches planted. He did not live long enough to witness any serious declension of the life of the Church, or any diminution of its converting power ; hence he had never to go through the agony of praying for a revival. Long after his day the atmosphere of the Church remained surcharged with spiritual power ; missionary zeal continued to grow ; and an era of unparalleled conquest and enlargement was enjoyed. But that condition of things did not last. In later times there was a frequent recurrence of dark days, days of weakness and depression, days when the Lord seemed to be absent, and the connection of the Church with the Holy Spirit seemed to be broken. When these evil days have come, the Church has been under the necessity of going back to the beginning, putting herself in a waiting, praying attitude, and seeking a new influx of power. And whenever she has done this,—when-ever, in other words, she has brought herself into direct touch with the Holy Spirit, and



opened her heart to the inflowing and infilling of His power,—Pentecost has been repeated. A warm breath of life has blown from the land of spices, and the spiritual atmosphere has been suddenly changed; the bands of frost in which her life has been bound have been unloosed; the naked trees in the Lord's garden have burst into leaf; the desert has begun to blossom as the rose. How this change came about, let those who deny the direct agency of the Spirit of God rise and tell. But mysterious as this operation of divine power is, it is not magical. Its effects are moral. Lives are transformed by it; bosom sins are slain; the onflowing tide of social iniquity is turned; a wave of faith succeeds a wave of unbelief; an unseen hand touches the strings of the heart, and celestial music is heard where before were only the harsh discords of a life out of tune with the Infinite. If the dictum of Cardinal Manning be true, that "wherever you behold a good thing there you see the working of the Holy Spirit," a work like that which has just been described will stand the test.

In every revival movement there is a mystical quality. The touch of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man is immediate. The human, conditional element, which is never altogether absent from any moral state, is in the background. Hearts are moved by a power which

they cannot explain. The wind of the Spirit bloweth where it listeth. A sound is heard of a going upon the tops of the mulberry trees—the mysterious movement of a higher power. The tide of the Spirit sweeps in, lifting up souls that have been stranded on the muddy banks of the world, upbearing them upon its bosom, and bearing them forward into the open sea, and starting them upon their heavenward voyage. The whence and the whither of the Spirit's movements are beyond our ken. He works by a higher law than we can understand. He is therefore more likely to take us by surprise, than He is to do things in the way in which we expected to see them done. We look for Him to come in one form and He comes in another ; we expect a downpouring rain, and His influence distils as the dew ; we look for a rushing mighty wind, and He comes as a gentle zephyr ; we expect a thunderbolt to fall from heaven, shattering the rocks in pieces, and He comes as a voice of gentle stillness. Happy are those who stand ready to welcome Him in whatever guise He comes.

In no other way can the waning influence of the Church be recovered than by a new infusion of life, a new baptism of power. Before she can win back the alienated masses she must feel the quickening breath of the Spirit of God. She is

weak for conquest, because the deeper sources of life have been left untapped. The surface wells from which she has been drawing her supplies have been drained dry. She needs to *go* deeper, to *live* deeper; she needs to 'have her life "fed from the upper springs." Speaking of the division of the Church of England into High, Low, and Broad, the late Archbishop of Canterbury remarked, "What we need is deep Churchmen." What is needed everywhere is deep Christians—Christians in whom the spirit of devotion runs as deep as the heart of Christ. Christian life can no more rise above the inner spiritual principle that controls it, than water can rise above the level of its source. The saying of Herbert Spencer, that "by no political alchemy can we get golden conduct of leaden instincts," has a wider application than he ever dreamed of giving it. Changing the terms, it might be said that by no process of spiritual transmutation can we get golden conduct out of leaden motives. But while that is true, leaden motives can be changed into golden motives. And it is precisely this that Christianity does. It gives the golden heart from which comes the golden life.

The practical application of the teaching of Paul the Mystic touching the revelation of the inner life to the outer may be summed up in the Old Testament admonition: "Keep thy heart

above all that thou guardest ; for out of it are the streams of life " (Prov. iv. 23). Never did the Church stand more in need of this admonition than she does to-day. She is giving too much attention to " the outward business of the house of God " (Neh. xi. 16), while the hidden life is being neglected ; she is giving money while withholding prayer ; she is cultivating the social side of religion at the expense of the spiritual ; she is making a sense of humanity a substitute for fellowship with God. The result of this is a shallowing of her life, a weakening of her power. Much of her activity is the force of habit, the momentum of past experience ; the mechanical performance of outward works after the power which originated them has departed. In no other way can her spiritual efficiency be maintained than by balancing the centrifugal force of her activity by the centripetal force of communion with God.

4. *That the source of authority in religion is found not in external things, but in the things of the spirit.*—Paul looked upon the external as pedagogical. It was a schoolmaster to lead men to the spiritual. Those who follow the true order of development begin with finding authority in outward things, and end with finding it is in inward things. They hold on to external supports until they gain inward strength, as a

cripple holds on to the crutch until he gains strength of limb. "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. xiii. 10). When the pearl of spiritual authority is grasped, the bauble of external authority falls from the hand. Reversing Emerson's lines, it might be said:

"When the gods arrive,  
Half-gods go."

In his posthumous volume on *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, Sabatier contends that the day of external authority is past, and that before us in the present day lies the alternative between autonomy and anarchy, the religion of the spirit and atheism. He declares that "the outward authority of the letter has given place to the inward authority of the Spirit,"<sup>1</sup> and the sole authority which Christians to-day can recognise is that of the Holy Spirit speaking in Christian consciousness. With passionate earnestness he contends that if Jesus were with us now He would say, "O men of little faith, all that has grown old and vanished with the religion of authority is empty wine-skins and worn-out forms. Suffer the religion of the Spirit to appear."<sup>2</sup> To the same effect are the recent words of Principal Rainy, spoken in the New College, Edinburgh, out of the heart

<sup>1</sup> P. 259.

<sup>2</sup> P. 277.

of the troubles of "The United Free Church": "There is a craving in many minds for something like a fixed authority. There is no such authority. The only security against apostasy is to be found in the presence and power of the Spirit, and in maintenance of fellowship with our Living Head. To place trust elsewhere is itself apostasy." Witnessing to the same truth, Thomas Erskine, with fine discrimination, reminds us that "our instruction may and does come from without, both in morals and religion, but the authority that seals it is within." To the same effect is the declaration of the Westminster Confession of Faith, that it is by the witness of the Spirit borne to him in his heart "by and with the Word" that the believer receives "full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth thereof."<sup>1</sup>

It is here that Paul found a sure foothold for his faith. He rested in the spiritual. The witness which he received in his own spirit to the power of Christ was absolute and final. He knew no higher ground of authority than this. And in the nature of the case it was the only kind of evidence which he could possess. From the pitfall of external authority into which the Christian world has so often fallen he was mercifully saved. The Church which he knew laid no claim to be the keeper of the truth and of the

<sup>1</sup> Chap. i. 5.



conscience ; all the authority which she possessed being that derived from her indwelling Lord. The Bible which he knew was the Old Testament Scriptures, the body of truth which composes the New Testament not being yet collected and written, and the Christ whom it reveals being still the Christ of tradition. How astonished he would have been had he been able to foresee the place of authority that was to be given to his own letters, which form so important a part of the sacred canon ! All the authority he would have claimed for them himself would have been the authority they might acquire from the faithfulness with which they interpreted Christ to men. In making his appeal to others on behalf of Christ, he sought to "commend the truth to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 2). "I speak as to wise men," he says, "judge ye what I say" (1 Cor. x. 15). And again, "Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thess. v. 21). The final test of the gospel which he preached was its power to satisfy the spiritual nature of man. He believed that the truth as it is in Jesus carries with it its own evidence, and therefore speaks authoritatively to the heart of man.

In putting the source of authority in the things of the spirit, and thus making it accessible to all, Paul followed the teaching of the Master, who,

while pointing to Himself as the supreme authority, saying, as against all who had gone before him, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," at the same time made His appeal to the moral nature of man. Outward authority of any kind He never imposed upon men. He knew nothing of an infallible Church or an infallible Book. His method of teaching was not arbitrary and dogmatic. He expected His word to be accepted only when it was seen to be the embodiment of the highest reason ; He expected it to be obeyed only when it was seen to be the embodiment of the highest ethical ideal. He relied for His hold upon men upon the response which He was able to awaken in the human heart. "He spake with authority" because He spoke to the heart. The form of His authority was spiritual ; and spiritual authority was something so altogether new, so utterly foreign to prevailing conceptions, that few understood its real nature. It is a matter of regret that the title of Sabatier's masterly and suggestive work already referred to, *The Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, makes a contrast which is apt to obscure the point in question. By the religions of authority he means, of course, religions of outward authority. But is not the religion of the Spirit also a religion of authority ? And is not the inward authority of the Spirit more satisfactory than any other

form possibly can be ? This Sabatier believes ; and hence it is all the more unfortunate that he should have suggested a contrast which he himself tacitly repudiates. Regarding the satisfactoriness of this kind of authority, Mr. Bradley forcibly remarks that “ the man who demands an authority more solid than that of the religious consciousness, seeks he does not know what.”<sup>1</sup> So confident was Paul of the power of his appeal to the religious consciousness, that upon its results he was ready to stake all his hopes for the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth.

To trust implicitly to spiritual authority as Paul did, has always been a difficult thing for the followers of Christ to do. There is usually some little remnant of the external to which everyone continues to cling. When all external props are taken away the cry is heard, “ If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do ? ” But the props are not the foundation, and the taking of them away may be the means of leading the soul to fall back upon the foundation. There is no other way of being saved from panic than by trusting in the witness of the Spirit. When we rest upon the spiritual we can never be paralysed by inquiry into the outward and subordinate sources of authority. What though the Church should err in her judgments, we

<sup>1</sup> *Appearance and Reality*, p. 448.

have in the Holy Spirit an unfailing source of inward illumination ; what though corruptions should creep into the text of Scripture, we have in the Bible of the soul, written directly by the divine finger, a present and personal revelation, speaking with an authority which no outward revelation can ever possess. This inner, first-hand revelation, to which every outward revelation is at best merely a commentary, is to be followed unhesitatingly. The cold, calculating, doubting spirit, which George Fox in his Journal characterises as “the Sadducean intellect,” is to be renounced. The pilgrim staff is not to be always thrust out so as to discover if the stepping-stones are still in their places, before the swollen river is crossed ; but many a bold plunge forward is to be taken, in the confidence that bottom will everywhere be touched. A venturesome faith always justifies itself. Falling upon a seeming void, it finds the rock beneath.

From this part of Paul’s mystical message the preacher of to-day is to learn to make his appeal to the spirit of man, that he may win his homage to the truth. Nothing is really true and authoritative to any man until he has proved it for himself. The preacher who remembers this will be less of an ecclesiastical attorney, and more of “a seer in the word of

the Lord." While not ceasing to say, "Come and let us reason," he will also say, "Come and let us see"; while pointing men to bygone revelations as aids to faith, he will also bring them to the burning bush out of which the I AM is still speaking, and let them hear Him for themselves; and while pointing them to external revelations as confirmatory of faith, he will also bring them face to face with the Christ of consciousness, that the original experience of His saving power, out of which the New Testament records grew, may be repeated in them, so that they may be brought to acknowledge Him as the Lord of the conscience, the sovereign of the soul, who rules with undisputed sway over an empire in which no other ruler holds jurisdiction.

5. *That the religion of the Spirit ought to be characterised by the fire of a holy passion.*—There ought to be in it something of the mystic's ecstasy and rapture. This was certainly true of the religion of Paul; which "rose above the zero of rationalism," and has been well described as "morality aflame with passion" (Denney).<sup>1</sup> The emotional element in Paul's nature was

<sup>1</sup> Instead of the formula of Matthew Arnold, "Religion is morality touched by emotion," Prof. James Mark Baldwin would substitute, "Religion is emotion kindled by faith" (*Social and Ethical Interpretations*, p. 357). The point of present interest in all of these definitions is the recognition of the place which emotion occupies in religious experience.



strong. He was an acute and profound thinker; but he was something more than a reasoning machine, he was a man of deep and intense feeling. "All his thoughts were steeped in feeling" (Wordsworth). He translated truth into feeling and feeling into truth. He was keenly sensitive to life's pains and joys. His nature was of the impulsive, and not of the phlegmatic and callous type. He was often swept along by the tide of his emotions. His writings show this. The consuming zeal which he manifested as a persecutor of the Church, he manifested as an Apostle of Christ. He was "baptized with the Holy Spirit, and with fire." As a fiery evangelist he blazed his way through the world, kindling a moral conflagration wherever he went. His preaching was marked by ecstatic accompaniments; and in the Churches which he planted there often sprang up scenes of the wildest disorder, which he had difficulty in quelling. As might be expected, he was himself subjected to swift alternations of feeling, his moods being changeful as the shifting clouds. The highest spiritual exaltation was followed by the deepest spiritual depression. He was particularly sensitive to social atmospheric conditions. His heart, like a brimming vessel, spilled over, in tenderest sympathy for others, at the slightest jar. Over his converts he travailed



in spirit with a mother's anguish (Gal. iv. 19); he warned them with tears (Phil. iii. 18); he was in a continual flutter of agitation on their account. He was himself well aware of a tendency to emotional excess; and while accepting the current imputation that he was beside himself, he justifies himself by saying that he was beside himself "to God" (2 Cor. v. 3). His zeal was "a zeal of God" (Rom. x. 1); that is, a zeal for God and from God. Moreover, this Godlike zeal was by no means barren of results. Instead of being a mere effervescence of pious sentiment, it was a practical force expending itself in beneficent deeds. For a life of religious emotionalism divorced from profitable activity Paul had no respect whatsoever. His exhortation, "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. v. 18), is as far as possible from countenancing the idea of "an egoistic intoxication of the individual by supposed altruistic emotion, with an incapacity of corresponding self-sacrifice in action."<sup>1</sup> His own life gives the lie to such an interpretation of his words. Indeed, so full is his life of all the practical virtues, that Wernle goes to the extreme of regarding it as the normal type of the Christian life after the "excision" from it "of the really mystical

<sup>1</sup> *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings*, Maudsley, p. 341.

element.”<sup>1</sup> But the excision of the mystical element would be the excision of the very element of “feeling” out of which all the practical virtues grew.

The emotional side of Paul’s religion has been an interesting study to the psychologist. He has examined it symptomatically, diagnosing it as a physician might diagnose the disease of a patient. He has considered its pathological manifestations in order to determine whether they were abnormal and morbid, or normal and healthy. Looking at emotion as the thing that moves,—the propulsive power in life,—he has tried to discover what it was that moved a man like Paul so profoundly, and propelled him forward in the path of self-denying service. But with all his searching, the psychologist has been compelled to confess that he has hitherto failed to discover the secret of the Christian life. The reason for this failure is thus stated by Morris Jastrow: “Physiological psychology leads us further into the domain of soul-life than speculative philosophy; but it, too, must confess its inability to explore the innermost recesses of this mysterious domain,”<sup>2</sup> in which religious emotion has its birth. From this region, into which psychology cannot penetrate,

<sup>1</sup> *Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> *The Study of Religion*, p. 278.

the great tidal wave of emotion started which swept over the soul of Paul. On the side of his inmost being which opened towards God he was taken possession of by divine love. This love held him for ever in its overmastering grasp, constraining him to live a life of unselfish ministry to others. Some of the effects of this love the psychologist can measure ; but the love itself, which forms the ultimate source of the Christian life, can be known only by those who have the power to see into the heart of God.

From the experience of Paul the Mystic comes a message which furnishes an antidote to the spirit of coldness which characterises much of the religion of to-day. Modern religion is prevailingly practical,—practical, that is to say, in the hard, outward sense. It is ashamed to show its heart—ashamed almost of having a heart to show. Its enthusiasm is suppressed ; the fires of its devotion are banked ; its fervour is smothered by conventionality ; its general condition is that of spiritual frigidity. There are, however, in many quarters signs of reaction. Mrs. Humphry Ward, who certainly cannot be charged with any prejudice in favour of emotional excess in religion, while expressing her satisfaction with what she calls “ the down-break of revelation and miracle,” rejoices that

“moral speculation is losing the note of Stoic calm, and is taking the note of mysticism, of deep and passionate feeling.”<sup>1</sup> This reaction is sure to grow. Decayed emotions have a way of sprouting up from the stump ; repressed emotions have a way of breaking out at unexpected places. A fresh touch of the Spirit of life will bring a return of the mystic’s holy ecstasy and his holy abandon. An upward rush of life will burst the husk of indifferentism, bring back the spring-time of the soul, and cause the flowers and fruits of righteousness to appear. A whiff of the divine afflatus will do more to bring out the latent music of the soul, than the most careful drilling in musical technique. It was because of his appreciation of this fact that Goethe called mysticism “the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings.” He saw that it kept religion alive by bringing the heart of man into immediate contact with the heart of God. He saw that it taught man to love, and that love set the heart aglow. This is certainly true of Paul’s mysticism. It is “the scholastic of the heart.” It stirs the heart to its deepest depths by bringing it into contact with the Eternal Lover. It does not make it all of religion to love, but does make love the first thing, the essential thing in religion. To revive love in

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Hibbert’s Journal* for Nov. 1903.

the Church is to warm her life-blood, quicken her pulse-beat, and cause her life to glow with the fire of a consuming zeal.

That there still is danger of Christians losing control of their feelings, 'and becoming the victims of emotional inebriety, goes without the saying. Human nature is ever the same; and the thing that happened in Paul's day has been often repeated. The rudder of reason has been shipped, and souls have drifted upon the rocks; violent fires have been kindled, which have soon burned themselves out; a state of frenzy has been induced which has ended in collapse. In the presence of this danger there is a call for the exercise of self-control—a call for every Christian to hold himself well in hand. But while feeling ought to be restrained it ought not to be suppressed; its suppression being just as wrong and as harmful as its undue expression. As civilisation advances, feeling is toned down and held in check. To such an extreme has the repression of feeling been carried in the present day in the Western world, that the necessity no longer exists to turn the hose upon the fires of religious enthusiasm lest a devouring conflagration should burst forth. The danger lies in the opposite direction. The prevailing condition of the Church is that of half-heartedness, or lukewarmness. She is not "zealously

affected." She needs more of that exalted feeling, arising out of inspiration, to which Plato gave the name of *enthusiasmos*. She needs more of that divine possession which will kindle the flame of a holy enthusiasm. Let her guard, as hitherto, against lop-sidedness in development, by carefully balancing the rational, ethical, and emotional elements in her experience ; but at the same time let her cease to fear the consequences of losing her heart to Christ. When passionless she is powerless ; but when a passion for Christ is the most commanding thing in her experience, out of it will come that passion for souls, for righteousness, and for the kingdom of God, which has ever been the most obvious source of her conquering power.

6. *That the religion of the spirit provides a centre of rest in the midst of the world's turmoil and strife.*—All that was good in "quietism" Paul included in His Christian experience. He was a world-traveller ; always on the move ; always pushing forward to some new scenes of action ; yet he was absolutely free from feverish restlessness. He lived "an unceasing, unceasing life." He had found a centre of repose at the heart of the cyclone. His quietness of spirit did not come from insensibility, or stoical indifference, or indolent satisfaction with things as they were. It came from his faith



in God. Sitting down in the midst of the ruin of his creature comforts, he bent as the willow to the blast, and rejoiced in God as the source of all his joy. Having enjoyed God in all in the days that he abounded, he could enjoy all in God in the day when he suffered loss. Into this condition of repose he did not come at once. Not until he looked back over long years of discipline was he able to say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. iv. 11). The lesson of contentment he had learned in the school of experience, under the tuition of Christ, during the twenty-five years that stretched between his conversion and his imprisonment in Rome. In his youth he had been hot-blooded and impatient. If we turn to his earlier Epistles, we see the onflowing stream of his emotions dashing and foaming over the rocks; in his later Epistles the stream has quieted down, and flows on through fertile plains, deepening and widening as it nears the ocean in which it is finally lost.

But to say that Paul schooled himself in the difficult task of bringing his mind to his lot when he could not bring his lot to his mind, is only half the truth. He also schooled himself to look at things from God's point of view. From the heights of divine communion he looked serenely down upon the hurly-burly of life, and saw noth-

ing worth worrying about. Carlyle's half-amused and half-compassionating question, "Why so hot, little man?" expresses what must have been his feeling as he surveyed the swarming anthill of human life. From his exalted position in the realm of the spirit, the affairs about which mortals toil and fret must have seemed as small as the world itself appears to the aeronaut who looks down upon it out of the clouds. This change in judgment-values was the result of applying a new standard of measurement. Into what small dimensions it caused some things to shrink, and into what large dimensions it caused other things to grow! To see things through God's eyes was to see them according to their spiritual worth; and to see them according to their spiritual worth was to be freed from all corroding care concerning their possession, and from liability to mistake concerning their use.

Christians of to-day need to recover the mystic's secret of repose, which Paul learned so thoroughly. They need to cultivate the habit of retreating into the secret places of the soul, as one might go from the hot and dusty street into the quiet and coolness of the cathedral. They live in a feverish spirit. Their work has about it too much of the clatter of machinery; too much of the "hustle" which belongs to the business world. A deeper, stronger, quieter type

of religion is demanded. They need to be reminded that the value of service is to be estimated, not by its bulk, but by its quality ; not by the noise it makes and the attention it attracts, but by what it expresses. The one act of the quiet, contemplative Mary, by which she ministered to the Master's higher necessities, outweighed the multiplied acts of Martha's bustling kindness. Volumes of devotion lay behind it. It represented a ministry, which was the rich but infrequent flowering of a life which had developed the power of repose. This higher ministry the Church has often depreciated and neglected. When jaded and overdriven souls have made a mute appeal to her for rest, the only answer she has given has been another lash of the taskmaster's whip. Is it any wonder that when they have not broken down altogether, they have eagerly clutched at any seductive opiate which might be offered them ; allowing themselves to be blinded to the fact that its quieting influence was caused by the paralysis of the moral nature ? Little heart have they to inquire into the foundations of a philosophy which seems to bring to them such substantial benefits. If fret and worry have been taken out of life, and the spirit of feverish restlessness out of work, they are not in a mood to grudge any price which has to be paid to obtain these results. To this class the

Church must pay greater attention. She must come to them offering benefits while demanding service. She must preach to them the gospel of rest along with the gospel of work. She must promise them a deeper and more heart-satisfying peace than anything else can give. This Paul was not afraid to do. He says to weary, care-laden men, "Live the life of faith, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iv. 7). He expresses the earnest desire, "Let the peace of God arbitrate in your hearts" (Col. iii. 15); *i.e.* let it take away all jarrings and discords, reducing everything within the soul to perfect harmony. Well he knew that nothing short of God's own peace would meet the deepest needs of the human heart. His sentiment was afterwards voiced by Mrs. Browning in her song of trust:

"Oh the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang  
west,  
And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around  
our incompleteness,  
Round our restlessness his rest."

Nor is this rest which Christianity promises, rest only when the battle is over, but rest while the battle is on; it is not rest only when the day's work is done and the hands are folded, but rest in the midst of arduous toil; it is not rest only when the petty annoyances and rivalries of life

have blown past, but rest while they gather around the head as a cloud of summer gnats ; it is not rest only when the ambitions of youth have faded out, but rest while the visions of the future still urge on to fresh endeavour. It is to those who are in the thick of life's conflict that the assurance is given, " In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Repose is the foster-mother of religion. It imparts strength to the weak and to the weary. If those who know how to work knew also how to rest, they would gain in power. In these days of strain and stress, when the balance is so easily lost between work and rest, there is special pertinence in the words of admonition, " Return to thy rest, O my soul ! "

7. *That the supreme interests of man as a spiritual being are connected with the spiritual universe.*—The testimony of Paul the Mystic to the reality and power of the supersensible is of special value to the Church of to-day. By emphasising the fact that experience includes more than comes through the five senses, it supplies an antidote to the prevailing materialistic tendency. Fortunately, materialism as a philosophy, with its gospel of dirt, has run its course. The spiritual origin of the universe is being recognised by scientists. They even speak of the spirituality of matter. Behind the atom is a great unseen force. The atom

itself, which was once thought to be solid, is discovered to be a globe in which hundreds of electrons of electricity revolve. The physical basis of life becomes more and more elusive. Those who search for it are brought to the borderland of a new kingdom. Scientists have ceased to speak of dead matter, for all matter is seen to pulsate with life. They have ceased to look upon matter as the ultimate reality, for they are catching glimpses of a spiritual force behind it of which it is the outbirth; and are beginning to admit that within and beyond the world of outward phenomena there is a spiritual world which microscope and telescope cannot penetrate.

But while materialism as a philosophy has well-nigh run its course, materialism as a habit of life has a stronger hold upon the world than ever before. Never was the tyranny of the material more powerfully felt, never was man so dependent upon material things; and never was the world so full of interest, or so imperative in its demands. This increase of interest in the visible, accounts in part for the decrease of interest in the invisible. Men do not feel the need of heaven to compensate for earth's privations and miseries. "The fond desire, the longing after immortality" of which the poet speaks, is not as strong as it once was. Yet never was there more restlessness of spirit, more heart



hunger for the spiritual, than at present. Man is too great to be long satisfied with what the world has to give. He cannot live by bread alone. Earthly things offer no finality to his desires. The deep within him is for ever calling to the deep without and beyond him ; and upon his ear is ever breaking the murmur of that far-off sea in whose cool waters the feverish spirit pants to lave.

The spiritual realm is the true home of man's soul. He had a spiritual origin, and can only be satisfied with a spiritual end. " He stands with his feet on earth and his head in heaven." The mystical world to which the vision of God brings him is immeasurably greater than the world which he sees and handles, and within it lie his most priceless treasures. In the midst of the din, and dust, and drudgery of the present mechanical age the upper world is ever calling upon him to look up and survey its glories, and to aspire after its eternal delights. It is entreating him to come out of his underground burrow and stand on the sunlit heights of open vision. Interesting as that world is which lies beneath his feet, the world which opens above his head is of still greater interest. Out of it come some of life's deepest and noblest motives. What it has yet to reveal is of immense and ever-increasing importance. As life's mysteries

thicken, we long for some hint of the secrets which it guards so well. And while the full vision, which would dazzle and blind, is wisely withheld, hints are freely given. When sorely bestead, harassed with doubt, burdened with care, wrung with sorrow, we are lifted above the cloudline into the sunlight, by receiving an earnest of the inheritance which is "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." When the heart has sickened at our failures to reach our ideals, we are comforted by the reflection that life cannot be known in itself; and that under the limitations of the present its ideals cannot be fully worked out; and that it needs a whole eternity of the spiritual world to complete the development of a soul.

The present-day reaction from the spirit of other-worldliness which marked the religion of even a few years ago, is a healthy one. But every reaction is an extreme, and this one is no exception. The substitution of sociology for theology is only a temporary make-shift. Men need to know more about society, they need to know about their social relations and obligations, but they need still more to know about God, and about their higher relations and obligations. Men dwell in two worlds. They are citizens of two kingdoms; and while the duties to the one sphere do not necessarily conflict with the

duties of the other, it is the duties of the higher sphere which they are in the greatest danger of neglecting. The earth-side of religion is much more tangible than the heaven-side. A land flowing with milk and honey is to the multitude much more appealing than a vague immortal hope. It is this that is giving socialism its power. It is winning converts because it is proclaiming a gospel palatable to this material age. If religious teaching moves in the same way, there is danger of that condition of things being repeated which came to ancient Rome when the heavens were emptied of the gods. The prophetic vision of the triumph of social ideals, which Christianity holds out, is indeed that of a new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God ; but in that city man has no eternal habitation. His true and enduring home is beyond it. From the seen he is to reach out to the unseen ; from the temporal he is to reach out to the eternal.

What a poor thing life becomes when the soul's dearest hopes are materialised, and its wistful questionings and reverential wonderings are treated as visionary. Speaking from the world point of view, Mr. Theodore Watts Dunton, the English poet and novelist, has said that "the old impulse of wonder, which came to the human race in its infancy, has to come back and

triumph before the morning of the final emancipation of man can dawn." Something of the same kind has to take place within religion before it can fulfil its highest ministry. It has to excite wonder, stir hope, inspire worship. It has to send men with trembling awe into the presence of the sublime realities of the spiritual world that they may wait for the opening of the clouds and the down-shining of the divine glory. While others are seeking to bring the world back to "the old nurse, the Platonic philosophy," the Christian teacher must seek to bring it back to that higher idealism set forth in the words, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern shown to thee on the mount" (Heb. viii. 5). Men need something more than earthly ideals; they need to follow a flying goal which is for ever beyond them, and which leads them to what heaven alone can consummate.

The mission of mysticism has ever been to proclaim the primacy of the spiritual and the eternal; to keep men alive to the mysteries that surround them; to make them see and feel that they are spiritual beings living for the present in mortal bodies; to prevent them from making the body the tomb of the soul; to keep them from becoming submerged in the mire of materialism; to help them live on the inside of life;

and to awaken within them a keener appetite for immortality. Turn to the writings of John Bunyan, the mystic of Puritanism, and see how little he was affected by the affairs of the body compared with the affairs of the soul, and by the affairs of time compared with the affairs of eternity. He does not speak of life's difficulties, but of the unseen forces with which he had to contend. What was taking place in the world around him was of secondary interest to what was taking place in the city of Mansoul. The prizes of earth were as the small dust on the balance compared with the prizes of heaven. The figures of his symbolical mysticism he was compelled to borrow from earth, but the pigments with which they were coloured were the heavenly pigments with which rainbows are painted. But that which has made his allegories immortal is the fact that they deal with what is essential and enduring. The writings of Paul the Jewish mystic and Bunyan the English mystic, survive for the same reasons ; to wit, because they speak to man's inner nature, reveal to him his spiritual environment, and call upon him to "follow the gleam."

8. *That the living God is the ultimate of human thought ; and union and communion with Him the ultimate of human experience.*—This is the central, comprehensive, and inclusive

thing in the message which comes from Paul's mysticism to the present age. It is also the fundamental thing in all the varied forms of religious mysticism. For mysticism is at bottom a search for the ultimate reality. It is born of the unappeased hunger of the heart for God. It is based upon the conviction that an intimate relationship exists between the finite and the Infinite, and that because of that relationship God can hold direct communication with man, and man can hold direct communication with God. Its faith in a God who is at once immanent and personal is voiced in the words of Tennyson :

"Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet."

Divine communion was with Paul conscious and personal. It was not communion with the Soul of the Universe, but with the heart of the Eternal Father. It was, as Smith of Cambridge has expressed it, "the knitting of a man's centre with the centre of divine being." Frequently, by reducing God to an abstraction, mysticism has rendered anything like real communion impossible. Coming in originally as a protest against anthropomorphism in religion, it has begun by declaring that God is greater than all the forms in which He has been or ever can be expressed, and has ended by discarding all forms



whatsoever, forgetful that apart from forms of some kind it is impossible to conceive of God at all. The consequence has been that God has been represented as a luminous haze rather than as a light shining in the soul. But this pantheistic tendency is, as Inge reminds us, "a pitfall for mysticism to avoid, not an error involved in its first principles." To the true mystic God has always been a living being, the source of personal inspiration, the object of personal fellowship. He has not thought of himself in his union with God as sucked up into the vortex of nothingness, but as drawn up into the heart of Primal Love, and made one with it in all its tender sympathies and affections. His life in God has been a life of individual moral completeness.

The God with whom Paul the Mystic sought to dwell in the union of love, was to him neither unthinkable nor unknowable. He passed knowledge, yet He was apprehended of knowledge. If the fulness of His knowledge was too great to be poured into one tiny cup, what the cup contained was real knowledge. It was a sample of the ocean from which it had been taken. Incalculable harm has come to religion from the influence of the Kantian philosophy, which has denied the directness of knowledge. Kant held that we do not know things in themselves, but only in their thought-forms. He did not deny

that knowledge has an objective reality, and that grounds for the rationality of its certainty exist; but he maintained that all we really know is what is in our minds. To find a basis for the certainty which man's ethical necessities require, he carried over from pure reason the contents of which he robbed it, and bestowed them upon what he called the practical reason. To the practical reason he attributed the knowledge of a supersensible world, of a supreme being, and of a moral imperative, in the grip of which all men are held. This splitting up of man's reason is as confusing as it is unphilosophic. The mind of man is a unit. The certainty given by Kant to the moral nature must not be denied to the intellectual nature. It is with the mind that man knows God; and he knows Him because He is objectively real. What he possesses is not only the knowledge of a thought-form of God, but the knowledge of God Himself. To substitute a thought-form for the objective reality of which it is but the image, is to give a stone to them who ask for bread. Man's soul cries out for God—the living, loving, personal, present God; and it will be satisfied with nothing else, and with nothing less.

Immediacy of knowledge is implied in the fact that knowledge merely perceives and does not create its object. It can perceive God

because He is there for the seeing. If anyone fails to see Him it is because he does not look deep enough. Let the scientist look beneath the surface of things and he will find force ; let him look still deeper and he will find will ; let him look deeper still and he will find heart ; let him go one step further and he will find God. God is not only the heart's ultimate, He is also the mind's ultimate. To speak of Him as essentially "an object of feeling, not of the intellect," is to ascribe to Him too narrow a place in the sphere of religion. He may indeed be spoken of as "an unutterable sigh lying in the depths of the heart," but He is also a felt necessity of the intellect. He is, in fine, the final resting-place of man's entire spiritual nature.

It is at this point that Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, in his book entitled *The Garden of Nuts*, reaches his somewhat mystical definition of mysticism. After declaring that the inward way in which, according to mysticism, God is to be found constitutes "the central doctrine of mysticism," he says, "All Christian mysticism rests on the primordial facts that we came out of the great centre, and that our duty and rest are in that centre. Mysticism is accordingly counsel to the exiled. It assumes that God is to be found, and that therefore there is and can be only one great work in life, that work being to accomplish an

individual reversion to the fountal source of souls." This definition gets near to the heart of mysticism. It brings to view the practical aim of mysticism, which has ever been the return of the soul to the source of its life in God.

The possibility of finding God and opening up direct communication with Him ought hardly to be doubted by those who consider the present-day marvels of communication between one human spirit and another. In the electrical department of the St. Louis Exhibition,—which was well named the Wonder House,—besides the wireless telegraph there was the radiophone, a wireless telephone by which a human voice can travel astride an electric wave across the ocean ; and the teleautograph by which a person may write a message upon an electric cylinder at one end of the wire, and a *fac-simile* of the message will be written at the other end. These new methods of communication are suggestive of still subtler methods of communication in the spiritual realm. Telepathy is not a proved hypothesis, nor perhaps can it ever be, but it is a working hypothesis. When friend is separated from friend, the conviction is often expressed, " Across the world I speak to thee." Intercourse of soul with soul is not merely possible, it is probable :

" Star to star vibrates light: may not soul to soul  
Strike through some finer element than its own ? "

Modern scientists like Flammarion believe in the possibility of establishing communication between the earth and Mars. The greatest wonder of all is that communication has actually been established between earth and heaven. This we owe to Jesus. For did He not define His mission to be the opening of heaven, and the bringing of heaven and earth into closer relationship? (see John i. 51). Yet how lightly is the wonder passed over that man can speak with God and God can speak with him. Sometimes God's message comes with overpowering force as it did to George Fox in the valley of Beavoir. To quote his own words: "One morning a great cloud came upon me, and a temptation beset me; and it was said, All things come by nature; and the elements and the stars came over me so that I was in a manner quite clouded with it. And as I sat still under it and let it alone, a living hope arose in me, and a true voice which said, 'There is a living God who made all things.' And immediately the cloud and temptation vanished away, and life rose over it all, and my heart was glad, and I praised the living God." It is this sense of God, let it come as it may, that is the essential thing in religion. And the ground of its possibility lies in the fact that God is near, and is in constant connection with the spirit of man.



But this consciousness of God, of which George Fox, in common with all religious mystics, speaks, has behind it more than the fact of an established connection between God and man ; it has also behind it the fact that God is actively seeking man, and is endeavouring to get from him some response to his messages. The reason why anyone finds God is because God has first of all found him ; and the reason why God has found him is because He has sought him. The unending search of God after man is perhaps the most distinguishing thing in the Christian revelation. Other religions represent man as seeking God, Christianity alone represents God as seeking man. Man is "for ever haunted by the Eternal mind." The divine voice resounds in his soul as the shell is fancied to murmur the music of the sea. The object of God in all His outgoings after man is to awaken within him a sense of His presence. Like the mother crooning over her babe, He tries to get some response, however faint, to His brooding tenderness. He touches man on every side of his spiritual nature ; applying the kinds of stimuli fitted to arouse him from his moral dormancy. He speaks to him through his conscience, his imagination, his reason, and his heart. He wants to be recognised ; He wants to be known ; He wants to be loved ; He wants to open up intercourse



with every man so that He may be of help to him. He is not content that men should know something about Him; He wants them to know Himself as one spirit knows another. It is life eternal to know God in this personal and experimental way. To attain personal knowledge of God, and directness of connection with Him, has ever been the goal of mysticism. With a devout mystic such as Paul, this was the Ultima Thule of the spirit's quest.

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